

Ethnic minority migrant Chinese in New Zealand:

A study into their acculturation and
workplace interpersonal conflict experiences

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualifications of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my husband Roderick McIntyre, my late adoptive mum Madam Yap Kin Lan, and my late father-in-law Dr. William Henry Rankin McIntyre whose personal integrity and uncompromising ethical stance is a beacon of light as well as a living legacy for me.

ETHICS APPROVAL

Ethics approval from AUT University Ethics Committee (AUTEC) was granted on 09 August 2006, for a period of two years commencing 01 March 2006. The Ethics Application Reference number was 06/120.

ABSTRACT

This study makes an important academic contribution by adding a new dimension to the existing scholarly literature on the acculturative processes of immigrants through its findings from an investigation into ethnic minority migrant Chinese Chinese's acculturation experiences in relation to workplace interpersonal conflict in New Zealand. The literature reviewed illustrates the complexities of the acculturation process for immigrants and is of prime importance and relevance to this study. The literature provides an informed academic foundation that aligns with the subject matter under study.

The focus of this study is on the acculturation process experienced by ethnic minority migrant Chinese in New Zealand as they strive to adapt to various aspects of their new surroundings. The study inquires into whether the length of acculturation has an influence on ethnic minority migrant Chinese's handling of workplace interpersonal conflict in the New Zealand. The researcher's interest in conducting this study arises from her own personal acculturation and workplace interpersonal conflict experiences as an ethnic minority migrant Chinese.

A phenomenological interpretive research methodology was adopted for this study. One-on-one indepth interviews of 25 ethnic minority migrant Chinese from China (Mainland), Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, and Vietnam provided primary data on the individual migrant's experience and perspective on acculturation and workplace interpersonal conflict in New Zealand.

The findings from the 25 ethnic minority migrant Chinese interviewed reveal the complexities and difficulties in the acculturation process, as they attempt to adapt to various aspects of their new environment. The adaptive strategies used almost certainly mean that the immigrants will have to make changes in their thinking, attitude, speech, and social conduct. There is a particular emphasis on the study of intercultural dynamics at play in the face of

workplace interpersonal conflict between immigrants and members of the host society.

The acculturation process is made more difficult for migrants who have negative workplace encounters in their intercultural interactions resulting in misunderstandings and conflict. The findings also reveal the migrants' response mechanisms, particularly in learning to be more assertive. This study found that the cultural orientations of the ethnic migrant Chinese are such that for many, this concept (assertiveness) has to be learned since it runs counter to their educational, cultural tradition, and familial upbringing. The principles of Confucianism are deeply rooted, such as respect for authority and an emphasis on 'giving-face' to others and preserving social harmony. From this study's findings, there is empirical evidence that Confucian principles are deeply entrenched in the ethnic minority migrant Chinese' psyche irrespective of which country of origin they come from.

In addition, the findings show that the acculturation experiences are unique to the individual migrant, depending on the person's previous exposure to a foreign environment, language proficiency and personality. This study shows that the acculturation process experienced by these migrants was a period of personal growth and development, acquiring self-confidence, self-rationalisation, changes, and adjustments. Also, the findings reveal that while the length of residence in the host country is a significant factor for these migrants, other factors are significant as well, such as acquiring a certain level of language proficiency and increasing self-confidence.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Immigration patterns have physically moved segments of the world population. Contacts with new, alien, unfamiliar or even mysterious cultures are becoming a normal part of everyday life (Porter & Samovar, 1994). The changing demographics across nations gave rise to a multicultural workforce throughout various parts of the world resulting in a growing number of ethnic minorities in different countries (Pio, 2005a), including migrant-receiving countries such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

On a world scale, a 2006 study estimated that there were 191 million international migrants, with Europe hosting the largest number at 64 million (van Oudenhoven, Ward, & Masgoret, 2006). The increase in global mobility meant that there is a large and increasing global pool of potential migrants for migrant-receiving nations such as New Zealand. A range of factors are likely to determine the attractiveness of New Zealand as a destination point for skilled migrants. These include New Zealand's economic prosperity, global stability, security and settlement outcomes and experiences for migrants (Badkar, Callister & Krishnan, 2006). The worldwide migrant statistics point to a significant need for multicultural sensitivity and understanding (Pio, 2005b), especially for migrant-receiving countries like New Zealand.

The focus of this study is on the acculturation process experienced by ethnic minority migrant Chinese in New Zealand as they strive to adapt to various aspects of their new surroundings. The adaptive strategies used almost certainly mean that the immigrants will have to make changes to their thinking, attitude, speech, and social conduct. There is a particular emphasis on the study of intercultural dynamics at play in the face of workplace interpersonal conflict between immigrants and members of the host society.

This study makes an important academic contribution by adding a new dimension to the existing scholarly literature on the acculturative processes of immigrants. This is achieved by exploring and developing sensitive insights into how ethnic minority migrant Chinese people, during their acculturation process, respond to and deal with interpersonal conflict in the workplace in New Zealand. The study investigates whether the ethnic minority migrant Chinese's cultural orientation and perspectives have any role in it. The insights gained from this study will be beneficial on several fronts. First, it will inform, promote and encourage appreciation and understanding of another race and culture – the ethnic minority migrant Chinese. In New Zealand and indeed other nations, in the advent of globalisation and all that it entails, this appreciation and understanding will be most advantageous to educationalists, employees, management personnel and management practitioners, and the wider community. Arguably, it will enhance overall organisational learning, benefiting organisation practitioners when dealing with a diverse workforce. This is because interpersonal conflict is a fundamental component of organisational life that requires managers and supervisors to consider how best to respond (Moberg, 2001).

Past research has viewed interpersonal conflict as a dynamic process which occurs between individuals and/or groups who are engaged in interdependent relationships, a phenomenon that is more likely to occur when a variety of background, situational factors and personal conditions exist (Barki & Hartwick, 2004). Conflict occurs in organisations affecting a host of individual and organisational processes and outcomes. The organisational importance of conflict and its impact is evidenced by more than 70 years of research generating a wide spectrum of knowledge. However, no research has been found that specifically inquired into ethnic minority migrant Chinese's acculturation process in organisations or workplaces, in relation to interpersonal conflict. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap in the academic literature.

This study draws on archival research, including primary resources such as Encyclopaedia New Zealand and Statistics New Zealand. It also draws on secondary sources such as contemporary social sciences, management and organisational studies, supplemented by primary research based on indepth one-on-one interviews conducted by the researcher in 2006 and 2007 in Auckland and Wellington. The majority of the 25 interview participants reside in Auckland. One participant resides in Hamilton but was interviewed in Auckland. Four participants who reside in Wellington were interviewed at their respective offices and homes.

Following this introductory chapter, the rest of the study is organised as described in the following section.

1.2 Structure and Scope of the Research

The organisation of this study is in six chapters. The structure of each chapter is a short introduction, followed by various sections in accordance with the topic under discussion, and a brief summary at the end.

To put this study into perspective, it is necessary for Chapter One, the Introductory chapter, to include a historical background of the immigrants in New Zealand, in particular ethnic minority Chinese. The historical background and perspective will lead on to a review of existing literature in Chapter Two. The literature review covers acculturation and migrant settlement, culture and culture shock, the role of communication, interpersonal conflict, cultural values, and related subjects.

Chapter Three explains and provides full details of the methodology used for this study. This is followed by Chapter Four which presents the research findings and discussions. It draws together the findings from the literature review and the data from the interviews. Along with the researcher's personal reflections on her own acculturation process, the limitations of this study and

its recommendations are found in Chapter Five. The study ends with a summary of its conclusions which are provided in Chapter Six.

1.3 Terms

For interpretive purposes, the terms “sojourners”, “migrants”, “immigrants”, “newcomers”, “strangers”, “foreigners”, “refugees”, and “aliens” appearing throughout this study are synonymous in meaning and are used interchangeably. As revealed in the literature review, the different terms are used by different researchers but they all mean much the same thing albeit with different nuances. The only exception is the term “sojourners”, a term which is used to depict a temporary or less permanent state (Berry, 1990; Broom & Kitsuse, 1955; Chan, 2005; Shibutani & Kwan, 1965; Spicer, 1968). Foreign international students and expatriate workers are some examples of sojourners.

Similarly for interpretive purposes, the terms “adopted country” and “host country” are synonymous in meaning, and are used interchangeably in this study.

1.4 Historical Context

Historically and continuing to the present day, immigration has played a significant role in population change in New Zealand, with the highest gains recorded in the current century (Bedford, 2003, cited in Pio 2005a). Changes in the immigration policies of New Zealand since 1987 saw a wave of Asian people, differing from the traditional source countries of Britain and Europe (Pio, 2005a; Van Oudenhoven, Ward, & Masgoret, 2006). These changes opened up various sources of immigration where entry criteria were based on skills preferred or needed in the workplace, resulting in a large influx of new and diverse immigrants. Migration from Asia grew rapidly, with China and India amongst the largest contributors to the growing population (Ward & Masgoret, 2006).

The 1990s, known as the 'Watershed' years, were significant in New Zealand immigration history, a period where foreigners came in big numbers. By 2006, China and Hong Kong together had contributed over 85,000 to the resident population in New Zealand (Encyclopaedia New Zealand, 2007). In 2004 it was said that after Australia, New Zealand had the world's second highest proportion of immigrants in its workforce (Encyclopaedia New Zealand, 2007).

United Kingdom and Ireland were New Zealand's most significant source of migrants historically, but by 2006, the proportion from this area had dropped to 28.6 percent. In contrast, the proportion of overseas-born people who were born in Asia increased from 23.7 percent in 2001 to reach 28.6 percent in 2006, and now equalled the proportion born in the United Kingdom and Ireland (2006 Census, Statistics New Zealand, 2006).

New Zealand is a country of migrants where people self identify their ethnicity (Pio, 2007). In the 2001 Census, Asians consisted of 6.6 percent of the population in New Zealand, whereas in 2006 they consisted of 9.2 percent of the population. New Zealand's estimated total population as of 16 June 2007 was 4,182,612 (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). In 2021, the number is projected to be 13 percent (Ewing, 2005a, b; Statistics New Zealand, 2006, cited in Pio, 2007). To mainstream New Zealand, as well as to the Maori, these groups tend to be undifferentiated and categorised as "Asians" (Pio, 2007). The undifferentiated term "Asians" may lead to all sorts of interpretive difficulties and perhaps misunderstanding and it is, therefore, instructive to clarify the term.

Geographically, Asia spans over approximately one third of the Earth's landmass, with 60 percent of the world's population in its various sub-regions of South Asia (including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka), Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar), East Asia (China, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Mongolia), and the countries located in Central Asia, North Asia and West Asia (Butcher, 2007).

Ip & Murphy (2005) refer to 'Asia' as a term used according to contemporary New Zealand convention. In this context, the term 'Asia' refers to the regions including East Asia and South Asia. East Asia is the most prominent as it includes regions like greater China (the People's Republic of China, Taiwan and Hong Kong), Korea, and Japan. Since the late 1980s, the term 'Asians' has often been used to denote Chinese immigrants from different regions such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam. As explained by McKinnon (1996, cited in Ip & Murphy, 2005, p. 14) in *Immigrants and Citizens*: "....Asians are first and foremost Chinese, the most populous Asian community in Asia and the most populous in New Zealand. The term 'Asian' is extended by New Zealanders to other nationalities of the East Asian regions, for instance, Koreans, Japanese, Vietnamese, Filipinos and Thais." Ip & Murphy (2005) point out that South Asians – Indians, Pakistanis and Sri Lankans – are seldom referred to as Asians in New Zealand. The authors assert that these individuals are commonly referred to as Indians, Pakistanis and Sri Lankans.

1860s: First Asians

The first Asians to arrive in New Zealand were the Chinese, who arrived as goldminers in 1866, while the Indians arrived in the later part of the 19th Century (Ip & Murphy, 2005). To put this into perspective, the Chinese began large-scale migration as early as the 17th Century with large numbers migrating to the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaya (now Malaysia), and Singapore (Ip, 1990). Closer to home, the origin of the ethnic Chinese community in New Zealand dates back to the colonial times, that is, to the 1860s (Ip, 1990; Ip & Murphy, 2005). The first Chinese who arrived did not come to New Zealand directly from China. Instead, they arrived via Australia, to work in the Otago goldfields in 1866 (Ip, 1990).

In the early days, the Chinese (mostly men) arrived in New Zealand with a sojourner mentality (Ip, 1990), necessitated by harsh discriminatory legislation and social hostility (Ip, 2003b). The legislations enforced at the

time ensured that the Chinese presence in the country was of a temporary nature. The original intent was for the Chinese to return to their homeland after their work in the goldfields. The Chinese are a visible minority (Ip, 1996; Ip & Murphy, 2005), and the most distinctive of the immigrant groups (Ip, 1990) in New Zealand. The Chinese were the country's largest non-Polynesian, non-European ethnic community (Ip, 1990) and "arguably the most conspicuous cohort among the 'new Asian immigrants', owing to the numbers and perceived economic privilege of the Chinese new arrivals from various countries of origin" (Ip, 2003b, p. xi).

Traditionally, New Zealand pursued a vigorous, albeit low-profile, white immigration policy (Brawley, 1993, cited in Ip, 2003b). The Chinese were officially branded "undesirable" (see Ip, 1996; Ng, 2003) and a series of legislative restrictions was introduced from 1881 onwards. The various legislative restrictions imposed on the Chinese included a poll tax which was explicitly designed to limit their numbers in the colony (Ip, 1990), a tonnage ratio, an education test, re-entry permits, and thumb printing (Murphy, 1995; 2003). In 1881 (Chinese Immigrants Act 1881), a poll tax of £10 was imposed on each Chinese person entering the country and by 1896, the poll tax increased to £100 (Beaglehole, 2005, cited in Pio, 2007). The Chinese were the only ethnic minority that had to pay a poll tax (Ip, 1996). Ng (2003) maintains that of all the discriminatory and anti-Chinese legislations, the worst law for Chinese goldseekers was the Old Age Pensions Act, which excluded Chinese (see also Ip, 2003b). According to Ng, the exclusion meant that it was left to the devices of the Chinese community to look after the elderly and the frail. For many, living under such a harsh discriminatory climate meant that their survival in a country they came to adopt as their own was attained at a considerable personal cost (Ip, 1996).

The Chinese were looked upon as the remains of an imported labour force that was no longer useful. Hence, the Chinese were regarded as social outcasts in every sense of the word. Their very presence was contrary to the ideal of building New Zealand as a "better Britain in the South Seas" (Brooking & Rabel, 1995, p. 37, cited in Ip, 2003b).

It is not difficult to see that historically, the early Chinese were effectively a vulnerable and marginalised minority; however, events beyond New Zealand marked the changing fortunes of the Chinese unexpectedly when China and New Zealand became allies during World War II. This relationship broached a new-found generosity towards China. New Zealand granted permission for the long-time resident Chinese men to apply for special temporary refugee permits for their wives and children. These permits would give them two years' temporary refuge in New Zealand. The men were required to pay a £200 bond (known as Poll Tax), and sign a pledge that their families would leave New Zealand as soon as the war was over, taking with them any children who might have been born in the interim (Fong, 1959; Ip, 1990, cited in Ip, 2003b; Ip & Murphy, 2005). Nobody had the foresight to know that this would mark the beginning of the growth of a genuine Chinese community, with all its complications for future race relations in New Zealand (Ip, 2003b).

Historical records show that the poll tax on the Chinese was formally abolished in 1944 (Ip, 1996). In 1947, the refugee wives and children of Chinese men who were already resident in New Zealand were granted residency and in 1952, the Chinese were allowed to apply for naturalisation (Ip, 1996). However, it is important as well as pertinent to put the poll tax into context. It is of interest to note that imposing a poll tax on the Chinese was not unique to New Zealand since there was a similar poll tax in Australia and Canada (Pio, 2007). The tax was waived by the Minister of Customs from 1934 but it was not repealed until 1944, by which time other countries had already abandoned it. In 2002, the New Zealand government, the first nation in the world to do so, officially apologised to the Chinese for the suffering caused by the poll tax (Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, 2005-2006). The formal ceremony was presided by the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister Helen Clark, who, as part of her historical address, announced: "Today we also express our sorrow and regret that such practices were once considered appropriate. While the governments which passed these laws acted in a manner which was lawful at the time, their actions are seen by us today as unacceptable. We believe this act of reconciliation is required to ensure that full closure can

be reached on this chapter in our nation's history" (www.executive.govt.nz, cited in Wong, 2003, p. 258).

In more recent times, events in the beginning of 1950 culminated in a number of pro-active nations coming together with a common purpose, impacting on the present social and economic ties that New Zealand enjoys with its neighbouring countries. The common objective was to establish a cooperative effort to develop the economies and raise the living standards in the countries of South and South-East Asia. This shared objective gave rise to an initiative known as the Colombo Plan.

1950s: The Colombo Plan Initiative and New Zealand's Role

In terms of the people arriving from other parts of Asia, Malaysian and Singaporean students came to New Zealand in the 1950s, principally via the Colombo Plan initiative. Asian refugee communities came to New Zealand in the 1960s and 1970s, while the Hong Kong Chinese came to New Zealand in the late 1990s. The Colombo Plan was initiated at the inaugural conference held between Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers in Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in January 1950 at which a Consultative Committee was set up (Auletta, 2000). The original participating Commonwealth members were New Zealand, the United Kingdom (UK), Canada, South Africa, Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), India, Pakistan, Ceylon and Australia (Auletta, 2000). Since then it has been extended to include Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaya (now Malaysia), Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, the United States, and Singapore (Encyclopaedia of New Zealand 1996). New Zealand played an active role in providing technical assistance in the form of training, which brought nearly 900 trainees to New Zealand in the first 10 years, notably to study engineering, agriculture, health, technical, and general education. Others have studied at the universities in arts and science courses (Encyclopaedia of New Zealand 1996).

In a speech to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Colombo Plan by launching the 'The Colombo Plan at 50: A New Zealand Perspective'

publication, the Rt Hon Helen Clark, Prime Minister of New Zealand proudly announced that the country played a prominent role (until the 1980s), as a founding member of the Colombo Plan. The Prime Minister said that in those thirty or more years, the Colombo Plan brought hundreds of people from throughout South, North, and Southeast Asia to New Zealand for advanced training in a wide range of fields. In turn, the students who came played a big part in introducing New Zealanders to Asian faces, accents, culture, and cuisine. The Prime Minister went on to say that the Colombo Plan assisted in creating links with various parts of Asia, helping to bring an awareness that New Zealanders and the peoples of Asia are neighbours, and have many common interests. It has cultivated friendship, cooperation, and partnerships which would otherwise not have been possible.

http://staging.labour.org.nz/labour_team/mps/mps/helen_clark/speeches_and_releases..., extracted on 26/01/2008.

1980s: New Zealand's Important Immigration Law Change

New Zealand, as a migrant-receiving nation, began loosening its immigration legislations with the passing of a significant and, arguably, ground-breaking law in 1987, the consequence of which had and continues to have an important impact on race relations in the country. The 1987 Immigration Act adopted a liberal and non-discriminatory stance whereby prospective immigrants are selected solely on the basis of personal merits measured by educational qualifications, age, occupation, and business skills, experience and capital (Ip, 1996; Ip & Murphy, 2005). Ip (1996) states that New Zealand was the last of the immigrant-receiving countries (such as USA, Canada, Australia) to abandon racially biased immigration laws. Traditionally, the country explicitly favoured 'migrants from traditional origins' (that is British migrants). Ip asserts that "the change of policy in 1987 was not prompted by racial tolerance or egalitarian ideals. It was dictated by the hope that Asian business acumen could help to 'kick-start' the country's sluggish economy" (p. 126).

The influx of the 'new Asians' in the early 1990s altered the nature and dynamics of the Chinese community dramatically (Ip, 1996), and heralded the dawning of a new era of race relations in New Zealand (Ip & Murphy, 2005). According to Ip (1996), the New Zealand public's attitude toward the Chinese minority changed because the behaviour and culture of many of the newcomers were perceived to be very different, so 'un-Kiwi'. New Zealanders were long used to the quiet and unassuming demeanour of the local-born Chinese. As such, the newcomers' more confident, assertive and some would describe as brash attitude, caused many New Zealanders to feel rising alarm. This was fuelled by negative and alarmist reports of 'Asian Invasion' in the media, resulting in anti-Asian sentiments (Ip, 1996). Under such a climate of hostility, the façade of racial tolerance began to crumble. Such negativity against the Chinese took its toll on the local-born Chinese, who had long learned to behave as the 'the model minority' (Ip, 2003b, p. xii) in New Zealand. In defence, they publicly distanced themselves from the newcomers, with some blaming them for the racist revival (Ip, 1996).

In the last two decades, anti-Asian (meaning Chinese) sentiments are regularly raked up in the lead up to the country's general elections by the NZ First Party. It has the effect of a polarising agent (Ip & Murphy, 2005) and is unconscionably used by unscrupulous politicians. It has to be said that this does nothing to help the cause for developing positive race relations in a country like New Zealand. If anything, it retards the nation's efforts in promoting social cohesion amongst its people.

1.5 Ethnic Migrant Statistics

The impact of migration and the resulting changing ethnic composition in the country is officially acknowledged in the 2006 Census results, which recorded the increases within the five years between 2001 and 2006 (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). As recorded in the 2006 Census, New Zealand's ethnic make-up has continued to change. European remained the largest of the major ethnic groups, with 2,609,592 people (67.6 percent of the population) in the 2006 Census. The Maori ethnic group is the second largest, with

565,329 people or 14.6 percent. Of the major ethnic groups, the Asian ethnic group grew the fastest between 2001 and 2006, increasing from 238,176 people in 2001 to reach 354,552 people in 2006 (an increase of almost 50 percent). This means that the population identifying themselves as of Asian ethnicity was 9.2 percent of the entire population. The Pacific peoples' ethnic group had the second-largest increase from the 2001 Census, up 14.7 percent to total 265,974 people.

The Asian ethnic group was New Zealand's fourth largest major ethnic group after European, Maori, and Other Ethnicity. Within the broad category of 'Asian' there are many individual ethnic groups with distinct characteristics, with Chinese accounting for approximately 44 percent of the Asian population. According to the 2006 Census, the composition of the Asian ethnic group is depicted in Table 1 below.

Seven Largest Asian Ethnic Groups		<i>2001 – 2006 Censuses</i>	
Ethnic Group	2001 count	2006 count	Percentage Change 2001 – 2006
Chinese	105,057	147,570	40.5
Indian	62,190	104,583	68.2
Korean	19,026	30,792	61.8
Filipino	11,091	16,938	52.7
Japanese	10,023	11,910	18.8
Sri Lankan	7,011	8,310	18.5
Cambodian	5,268	6,918	31.3

Table 1: Census 2006, Statistics New Zealand

1.6 Ethnic Minority, Ethnicity, Ethnic Identity and Race

Ethnic minority refers to demographic minority in the host country. In an organisational context, the consequences could be power differentials in the world of work (Pio, 2007). Very often, ethnicity emerges to the forefront of the ethnic minority person's experiences in the host society, based on perceived impressions and behaviour of members of the host country (Pio, 2007). Pio states that ethnicity gets prominence based on population demographics,

visible diversity discriminators such as colour and physical features, and the power equations and differentials in employment. It is of interest to note that according to Pieterse (1997, p. 365, cited in Pio, 2007), “the pejorative associations of ethnicity go back a long time. In original Greek usage, *ethnos* refers to nation or people, and *ethnikos* to heathen, or ‘others’”. This is consistent with Williams (1976, cited in Eriksen, 2002) for whom the word “ethnic” is derived from the Greek *ethnos*, which in turn was derived from the word *ethnikos*, which originally meant heathen or pagan.

Ethnicity is defined in Statistics New Zealand's data publications from its 1996 Census as belonging to ‘a social group whose members have the following four characteristics: a shared sense of common origins; claim a common history and destiny; possess one or more dimensions of cultural collective identity; and feel a unique sense of collective solidarity’.

Ethnicity is actually a term that is used to refer to a wide variety of groups who might share a language, different and distinctive characteristics as a people, historical origins, religion, identification with a common nation-state, or cultural system (Kim, 1994b; Lustig & Koester, 1996). According to Lustig & Koester (1996), subculture is a term that is sometimes used to refer to racial and *ethnic minority* groups that share both a common nation-state with other cultures and some aspects of the larger culture; for example, African Americans, Asian Americans, Arab Americans and other groups are referred to as subcultures within the United States of America.

‘Ethnicity’, along with the associated terms ‘ethnic’ and ‘ethnic group’, has been a main preoccupation since the late 1960s and remains a focus for research in the 1990s (Eriksen, 2002). The interest is still current. One important reason for the current academic interest in ethnicity is because this phenomenon is very visible in many societies today as they evolve with the changes in the social world, rendering it difficult to ignore.

Cohen (1978, p. 379, cited in Eriksen, 2002) described ‘ethnicity’ as “an ubiquitous presence”. According to Eriksen, ethnicity relates to the

classification of people and group relationships and that in social anthropology, ethnicity refers to aspects of relationships between groups which consider themselves, and are regarded by others, as being culturally distinctive. Ethnicity is an element of social relationship between people who consider themselves as being culturally distinctive from other group members (Yelvington, 1991, cited in Eriksen, 2002). As described by Poulsen, Johnston & Forrest (2000), these are individuals who possess a clear sense of their ethnic identity, and of belonging to a particular cultural group within the wider society. However, Banton (1967, cited in Eriksen, 2002) argued the need to distinguish between race and ethnicity as in his view, race refers to the categorisation of people, while ethnicity has to do with group identification. Eriksen (2002) points out that by definition, ethnic groups remain distinct from each other, while group identities must always be defined in relation to and comparison with non-members of the group.

In New Zealand, ethnicity is generally accepted as a culturally constructed concept (Allan, 2001, cited in Callister, 2004a). While the term “race” is still being used in countries like the United States (Callister, 2004b), “ethnicity” has gradually replaced the term “race” in scientific literature (Afshari & Bhopal, 2002). In New Zealand, social science researchers and official agencies now almost always use the term ethnicity rather than race. It is felt that the use of the word “ethnicity” moves the discussions more firmly into the area of social construction (Callister, 2004b). However, it is instructive to quote Collins’ (2001, p. 18) argument that, “Conventionally, races are regarded as physically distinctive (for example by skin color), while ethnic groups are merely culturally distinct but also have somatotypical differences (hair, skin color, facial structures, and the like).”

Viewing from a sociobiological standpoint, van den Berghe (1978, cited in Chan, 2005) claims that “both ethnicity and ‘race’ (in the social sense) are, in fact, extensions of the idiom of kinship, and that therefore ethnic and race sentiments are to be understood as an extended and attenuated form of kin selection” (p. 403) and that it is “deeply rooted, given at birth, and largely unchangeable” (p. 401). Nagata (1974, cited in Chan, 2005) argues that for

some individuals, they learn to cope by developing a double identity and lead a double life. Nagata proposes a model of 'ethnic oscillation' whereby individuals with no single or fixed reference group interpret situational requirements, adjust their behaviour for social affinity, expediency and social mobility. This is in line with Foster's (1977, p. 114, cited in Chan, 2005) study who finds that, "An ethnic identity is not necessarily an all-or-nothing, permanent thing. One may claim one identity in one situation and a different identity in another situation, depending on the relative payoffs."

In terms of ethnic identity, international studies indicate that minority groups tend to have a stronger sense of ethnic identity as opposed to members of the dominant socio-political group (DeRoza & Ward, 1999; James, Kim, & Armijo, 2000). Take, for example, Phinney's (1992) study in which he states that blacks, Asians and Hispanics in the United States have stronger ethnic identity than whites. Research carried out in New Zealand suggests similar trends (see Thomas & Nikora's (1994) study). Some authors assert that there is international evidence indicating that acculturating individuals who adopt an integrated strategy demonstrate better psychological and sociocultural adaptation (Berry, 1997; Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987; Ward & Kennedy, 1994). This is also supported by many researchers (see Horenczyk, 1996; Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, Horenczyk, & Schmitz, 2003; van Oudenhoven et al., 1998; Zagefka & Brown, 2002) who found that integration is the most preferred strategy because integration is the most 'adaptive' for immigrants.

It is a well-established fact that New Zealand was intended as a country of European settlement. For most of its history, New Zealand's identity was linked with the idea of Britishness, with belonging to the Anglo-Saxon community and to the British Empire. From such origins, New Zealand's national identity was said to be bound up with ethnic identity centred on Britishness, and Britishness was centred on the idea of race, specifically the Anglo-Saxon race (Murphy, 2003). As McKinnon (1996, cited in Murphy, 2003) says, 'to most intents and purposes, Anglo-New Zealanders and New Zealand were an identity' (p. 62).

Statistics New Zealand's definition of an ethnic group has in recent years been very broad but as a result of its review of ethnicity statistics, Statistics New Zealand (2004, p.14, cited in Callister, 2004b) proposed a new guiding definition. This draws on the work of Smith (1986, cited in Callister, 2004b) who states that the people who make up an ethnic group have certain characteristics including one or more elements of common culture which may include religion, customs, or language, unique community of interests, feelings and actions, a shared sense of common origins or ancestry, and a common geographic origin.

Throughout the world, concepts of ethnicity are undergoing continuous transformation. In New Zealand, official definitions of ethnicity now generally revolve around culture. For many New Zealanders, factors including nationality, descent, country of birth, religion, and skin colour continue to influence the definition of ethnicity among individuals and groups (Callister, 2004b). Callister feels that the rise of a multi-ethnic New Zealand, whether fully acknowledged or not, provides a major challenge for the design of social policy.

Ethnic identity is perceived as being fluid, dynamic and socially constructed (Porter & Washington, 1993; Pilkington, 2003, cited in Pio, 2005a). According to Banton (2000, cited in Pio, 2005a), the adoption of a specific identity depends on the circumstances, and becomes significant when immigrants enter a new society and find themselves a minority in the host society (Pio, 2005a).

Ethnic identity refers to a person's sense of self in relation to his/her membership in a particular group, with value and emotional significance attached to that membership (Chavira & Phinney, 1991; Orbe & Harris, 2001; Phinney et al., 2001, cited in Pio, 2005a). Phinney et al. (2001) assert that ethnic identity is an aspect of acculturation that focuses on the subjective sense of belonging to a group or culture, and is encompassed in the wider construct of acculturation.

1.7 Diversity in the Workplace

New Zealand is constitutionally a “bicultural” nation. Biculturalism is often described simply as a partnership between the Maori and Pakeha. Pakeha is a Maori term for white colonial settlers who were mostly from the United Kingdom. By its definition, biculturalism does not define the place of anyone who is non-Maori and non-Pakeha, such as the Chinese (Ip, 2003a).

New Zealand still has an official policy of biculturalism based on the Treaty of Waitangi, the founding document signed in 1840 between Maori and the British Crown. Nevertheless, van Oudenhoven et al. (2006) believe that New Zealand is evolving into a multicultural nation even though it has never formally adopted multiculturalism as an official policy. Some authors suggest this reflects New Zealand’s previous more cautious approach to ‘non-traditional’ immigration (Ongley & Pearson, 1995, cited in Fletcher, 1999) and also the debate in New Zealand over the relationship between biculturalism and multiculturalism (Fletcher, 1999).

Nonetheless, from the statistical data in the 2006 Census, there is a clear indication of diversity in the country. New Zealand society, like other countries and in particular the Western world, is becoming an increasingly multicultural with the nature of the workforce changing in tandem (see Humphries & Grice, 1995; Pringle & Scowcroft, 1996; Sauers, 1993; Sayers & Toulson, 1995, cited in Jones, Pringle & Shepherd, 2000). Organisations are under pressure to change to accommodate the diverse ethnicity of the workforce and population as a whole (Pringle & Scowcroft, 1996). Managing a diverse workforce is complex, underpinned by the need to treat multicultural employees with equity and fairness.

Sauers, writing in a New Zealand context, points out that it is not only about treating employees equally; rather, it is about ‘managing diversity requires individualised treatment’ (1993, p. 45, cited in Pringle & Scowcroft, 1996), presumably in a way that has neither favouritism nor discrimination. Pringle & Scowcroft (1996) state that managing diversity may be viewed as an

oxymoron and a contradiction in terms. This is because the very nature of diversity implies the need for 'mutual respect, collaborative work styles and employee empowerment' (Better-Reed & Moore, 1992, p. 47, cited in Pringle & Scowcroft, 1996). The social and political situation in New Zealand presents an environment where managing diversity should be deemed as an important issue. With the emphasis on biculturalism plus relevant discrimination legislation and changing demographics, all these provide an impetus for more diverse workplace practices (Pringle & Scowcroft, 1996). Successful implementation of diverse workplace practices requires a far-reaching awareness, understanding, appreciation and tolerance of the individual uniqueness of a multi-cultural workforce's historical and cultural backgrounds, along with their intrinsic personal, family and cultural traditions and values amongst all its residents in New Zealand.

1.8 Summary

Historically, New Zealand's engagement with Asia dates back to the 1860s, with the Chinese miners arriving in Otago for the gold-rush (Butcher, 2007; Ip, 2003b). The events in the 1950s and 1980s caused New Zealand to re-think its relationship with the Asian regions. It is in this period that relationships with Asian countries began with initiatives such as the Colombo Plan through which Malaysian and Singaporean students came to New Zealand. The response to a significant law change in 1987 witnessed an influx of immigrants from these regions. This chapter traces back to the very first ethnic Chinese who came to New Zealand as sojourners and who had to endure immense hardships imposed by harsh and discriminatory laws in the early days.

Nevertheless, it has to be acknowledged that the attempts at improving race relations in New Zealand have reaped some success. Ip & Murphy (2005) state that at the dawn of the 21st Century, New Zealanders seem to have accepted the new Asians with some equanimity. However, even in contemporary times, Asians are still seen as competitors for jobs and,

increasingly as competitors for social and natural resources (Ip & Murphy, 2005). It is proposed that greater contact with immigrants will consequently lead to more positive attitudes toward them. On a similar vein, greater acceptance of multicultural ideology will also consequently lead to more positive attitudes toward immigrants (Ward & Masgoret, 2006).

The 2006 census statistics point to an increasing culturally diverse New Zealand. Diversity in the workforce produces many advantages as well as challenges. Successfully managing a diverse workforce requires the understanding and appreciation of many complexities that each culture may present. Conversely, not appreciating the diversity and the inherent complexities of different cultures will often result in misunderstanding, disputes and conflicts.

On a national level, New Zealand, like other migrant-receiving nations, has to contend with the complexities of achieving some form of social cohesion amongst newcomers and members of the host society. On an organisational level, managing a diverse workforce can be fraught with difficulties. Ineffective handling of a multi-cultural workforce can spell economic and social disaster within the organisation. To this end, this study seeks to contribute a new dimension to the existing scholarly literature on migrants and their acculturation experiences, through its findings from an investigation into ethnic minority migrant Chinese's acculturation experiences in relation to workplace interpersonal conflict in New Zealand.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The research literature on the acculturation process of immigrants is reviewed in this chapter from a multi-faceted/multi-disciplinary approach. The literature concerns factors that spawn from migrants' settlement and acculturation experiences. These experiences include having to make personal, attitudinal, behavioural and cultural changes in both conscious and unconscious attempts to fit into the new environment of the adopted country. The literature on culture shock and its accompanying stresses lead on to scholarly studies on migrants' personality traits. The behavioural and cultural changes relate to the migrants' interpersonal relationships with the people of the dominant culture in the host country. A key aspect to the interpersonal relationship between migrants and people of the dominant culture is the medium of communication, thus the literature on the role of communication, in particular English language proficiency, is reviewed.

As conflict is a natural part of human interpersonal relationships, the literature on the various aspects of interpersonal conflict, in particular between migrants and the people of the adopted country's dominant culture, is also reviewed. There is a specific focus on literature concerning ethnic minority migrant Chinese's cultural traditions and values in this chapter, which is most relevant to this study.

Conflict permeates a multitude of organisational processes and outcomes. Its very existence and importance to management have been acknowledged in extensive fields including organisational behaviour, communication, marketing, social sciences and information systems (example: Deutsch, 1990; Pondy, 1967; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986; Putnam & Poole, 1987; Thomas, 1976, 1988; Wall & Callister, 1995). In addition, according to Barki & Hartwick (2004) conflict in organisations affects a host of individual as well as organisational processes and outcomes. Seventy years of research on

organisational conflict and its impact has generated a wide spectrum of knowledge (Barki & Hartwick, 2004).

In summary, the literature reviewed in this chapter is on migrant settlement, followed by acculturation and its strategies. Studies on the impact of culture shock on migrants, their personality traits or personal dispositions, communication competence, the differences and complexities between communication patterns and their resultant interpersonal conflict are also reviewed. This chapter ends with a literature review on face theory and face concerns in interpersonal conflict, including the deep-rooted influence of Confucianism that governs ethnic migrant Chinese' social interpersonal relationship and conflict handling.

2.2 Migrant settlement

In 1999, the New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS) commissioned a review of migrant settlement literature. An objective of the review was to determine the factors affecting migrant settlement. The review was conducted by Michael Fletcher and reported in September 1999. The review found that language proficiency and employment are both critical aspects of settlement. Additionally, the review found that the globalisation of trade, advancements in telecommunications and changing labour markets were altering the pattern and character of migration in ways that have profound implications for migrant settlement. Increasingly, people around the world find themselves having the capacity to migrate, not least of all aided by much cheaper and efficient international travel (see Castles, 1997; Hugo, 1999; Weinfeld, 1998, cited in Fletcher, 1999). In fact, according to Chan (2005) human beings have always moved from one place to another, only now they do so in far greater numbers and at much faster speed.

Many migrants have relatives in several migrant destinations and move regularly for economic, social and family reasons. All this means that the distinctions between temporary, long-term and permanent migration are

becoming blurred. New Zealand, as one of a number of migrant destinations, has to compete for skilled migrants. Under such a competitive climate, it is instrumental for New Zealand to be aware that one of the factors migrants take into account in choosing where to live is the ease of settlement into the host country (Fletcher, 1999).

Defining settlement can be problematic as definitions range from 'securing a permanent footing in a new country' (Holton & Sloan, 1994, cited in Fletcher, 1999) to 'full participation on the economic and social opportunity structure of the society' (Neuwirth, 1997, cited in Fletcher, 1999). Whatever the definition, for some migrants it will be a relatively faster process than for others. It is made more complex because it is not uncommon for migrants to be settled in one dimension of their life (for example employment) but poorly integrated in other aspects (Fletcher 1999).

It can be argued that the ultimate aim for the majority of migrants is successful settlement. Successful settlement was 'the achievement of invisibility by the migrant,' that is, neither migrants as a whole nor individual national groups should remain visible in the sense of having special needs beyond the initial period of arrival (Morrissey, Mitchell & Rutherford, 1991).

Being a small minority group is never a guarantee of invisibility or of being seen as non-threatening. To escape negative press and public scrutiny, Chinese needed to cultivate their 'good' image actively to ensure that tolerance was maintained. One way Chinese did this was by avoiding incidents, which essentially meant keeping out of trouble and minimising the risk of being perceived as troublesome. The success of this passive tactic was measured by the lack of negative public attention Chinese received, particularly from the media (Yee, 2003).

A review of the literature found a number of factors which affect migrant settlement. Fletcher (1999) identified five key factors. One, proficiency in the host country language is of over-riding importance. In the case of New Zealand, the ability to converse, read and write in English makes all aspects

of the settlement process quicker and easier for the migrant. Two, the migrant's family and social networks are central to the initial stages of the settlement process. Three, a transparent, effective and credible qualifications assessment and recognition process is of vital importance for the labour market integration of skilled migrants. Four, discrimination and prejudice where they do occur, retard the settlement process both in the labour market as well as in society. Five, fostering positive attitudes towards immigrants and immigration fosters effective settlement.

However, some authors maintain a different perspective on migrant settlement. For example, Ip (2003b) argues that it is quite clear that migration does not necessarily lead to settlement. Instead, it is seen as an onward step-migration to third countries, or return migration to the home country. Thus, it should not be assumed that either step-migration or return migration is an irrevocable step since migrants may retrace their route and make circular movements, in response to the needs of family members at particular stages of their lives.

2.3 Acculturation, Acculturation Strategies, Assimilation, Adaptation and Integration

The academic interest in migrant settlement and acculturation (and its strategies), adaptation, assimilation and integration has generated numerous studies, as after all, migration and intercultural exchanges have always been part of mankind's history. A significant distinction is that today, the breadth and pace of this is greater than previous historical trends due to globalisation, ease of travel, affluence and the opening up of countries and societies. Kim (1994b) notes a dramatic change in the enormous interface of cultures in all spectrums of human society, from political and economic activities to the arts and leisure pursuits.

There are a myriad of reasons why numerous immigrants and refugees cross oceans, continents and cultural boundaries. Reasons range from natural

disasters, economic, personal and family freedom, safety/security and aspirations for a better life (Kim, 1994b). Both immigrants and sojourners begin their life in the host country as “strangers” (Gudykunst & Kim, 1992; Simmel, 1908/1950). Some immigrants may continue to view themselves this way many years after migrating.

According to Harris & Moran (1991), migration is a catalyst which challenges people to deal with cross-cultural issues. Economic, social, religious and political circumstances cause groups of people to leave their home culture and enter into a strange and unfamiliar environment. Be they refugees, immigrants, migrant or foreign workers, or business people, they all go through a process of acculturation in varying degrees and forms (Harris & Moran, 1991).

‘Acculturation’, ‘adaptation’, ‘assimilation’, ‘integration’, and even ‘coping’, are words or terms that are used to describe how individuals respond to their experiences in other cultures. Lustig & Koester (1996) argue that the rate and degree of adjustment to another culture will vary greatly from person to person and from situation to situation. The authors have used the broader term of acculturation to characterise these adjustments because it includes various forms of cultural or individual adaptation (Berry, Kim, & Boski, 1988). Nevertheless, it is of relevance to this study to review the different terms in the following sections.

2.3.1 Acculturation

Acculturation has been described as a process of culture change that results from continuous contact between two distinct cultural groups through which individuals change their psychological characteristics so as to achieve a better fit (outcome) with other features of the system in which they live their life (Berry, Kim & Boski, 1988). Their study finds that acculturation also incurs physical, biological, and social changes, causing individuals to define themselves in new and different ways. Physical changes take place when

people are exposed to new physical stimuli such as consuming different foods and liquids, different climates, and reside in different kinds of accommodation. When people are exposed to a new culture, they may undergo actual physical or biological changes (Berry et al., 1988).

Callister, Didham & Potter (2005) describe acculturation as the process of *acquiring* a second culture, whereas assimilation is the process of *replacing* one's first culture with a second culture. Assuming that cultures are dynamic rather than static, Callister, Didham & Potter posit that the process of acculturation may nevertheless alter original cultures. Ward (2006) states that acculturation refers to the changes which result from continuous first hand inter-cultural contact. Acculturation as a construct was first studied at the cultural level within an anthropological context (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936) but subsequently the construct was introduced to the psychological literature (Graves, 1967). In recent times, acculturation was studied extensively at the individual level in relation to immigrants and refugees (Berry, 1997).

Writing more recently, Padilla & Perez (2003) assert that acculturation is a more dynamic social process. Acculturation occurs in a context in which newcomers and members of the host culture come into contact with each other. This assertion is congruent with the work of other scholars who also posit that acculturation is a social process and dynamic; and that moreover, acculturation refers to a range of behaviours, attitudes and values that may change when there is contact between the migrant and the host culture (Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Marin, 1992; Triandis, 1994; Sam, 2000, cited in Pio, 2005a). Additionally, Romero (2004, cited in Pio, 2005a) finds that individuals who have acculturated not only possess their minority culture but also some of the majority cultural elements, with the possibility of accepting or modifying certain aspects of the new culture and that of their original culture.

Oddly, in order to acculturate, immigrants have to undergo a process described as "deculturation" (Bar-Yosef, 1968; Eisenstadt, 1954), or unlearning some of their childhood cultural patterns and other long-held

beliefs and behaviours. Deculturation is also a stress- and anxiety-producing process. These stressful experiences of acculturation and deculturation (Barna, 1983; Dyal & Dyal, 1981; Kim, 1988; Moos, 1976) are forms of temporary psychic disturbance and even “breakdown”. In some severe cases, emotional lows are manifest in immigrants displaying a tendency to use various “defense” mechanisms such as denial, hostility, cynicism, avoidance, and withdrawal (Lazarus, 1966). Such cross-cultural stress experiences are known as culture shock (Furnham, 1984, 1988; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Oberg, 1960; Torbiorn, 1982), and are at their most acute during the initial phase of a sojourn or immigration.

For some – sojourners – the move is for a period of time and is not permanent. Foreign international students would fit this group. For others, the move from their native country and settling down in another country is more permanent. Immigrants and refugees would fit this group. They bring with them their previously held beliefs, values, worldviews, assumptions, routines and behaviours but it is a matter of time before they realise that these are irrelevant in the host country. This realisation confounds them and produces a high level of confusion, anxiety, and stress, all of which they somehow have to learn to cope with. Furthermore, they have to learn new ways to speak, think, and behave so as to align themselves with the residents in the host society. This is a process commonly referred to as “acculturation” (Berry, 1990; Broom & Kitsuse, 1955; Shibutani & Kwan, 1965; Spicer, 1968).

A number of scholars, for example (Hammer, Gudykunst, & Wiseman, 1978; Ward & Kennedy, 1993) have pointed out that there are multiple dimensions or elements associated with the acculturation process. Further, they state that intercultural effectiveness consists of three dimensions. They are the ability to deal with psychological stress, effective and appropriate interpersonal communication skills, and interpersonal relationship skills. In addition, there are various strategies which can aid the acculturation process.

2.3.2 Acculturation Strategies

There are a number of strategies to pave the path of the acculturation process for immigrants. Harris & Moran (1991) suggest that cultural preparation can be achieved by learning, observing, and immersing oneself into the local ways and practices including the unique expressions in language use in day-to-day communication. The authors advocate that learning about the non verbal communication system in the country such as the significant gestures, signs and symbols, expected courtesies, and typical customs, all serve to improve intercultural relationships. Harris & Moran maintain that it is essential that immigrants mix and socialise with the host nationals and be open to the many opportunities to learn about the locals. Harris & Moran's advice to immigrants is to be culturally sensitive as well, to learn and be aware of the special customs and traditions which will make them more acceptable in the host society.

Harris & Moran (1991) point out that there could be sub-cultural complexities and their advice is to refrain from generalising as the people the immigrants meet may not be truly representative of the majority culture. In an unfamiliar environment, say the authors, it is advisable for immigrants to adopt an attitude of healthy curiosity, a willingness to bear inconveniences, patience when answers or solutions are not forthcoming or difficult to obtain. Alongside this advice, Harris & Moran assert that in order to lessen disappointments, immigrants are advised to adopt a realistic mentality and avoid overestimating themselves, or their hosts, or the cross-cultural experience. In their final observations, Harris & Moran's (1991) recommendation is for immigrants to anticipate, savour, and confront the emotional challenge to adapt and change as a consequence of a new cross-cultural opportunity. Finally, the authors advocate preparedness and willingness to alter habits, attitudes, values, tastes, and relationships, as adopting such flexibility can become a means for personal growth for immigrants.

According to Berry (1990, 1997), acculturation consists of four strategies. They are (i) integration; (ii) separation or rejection; (iii) assimilation; and (iv) marginalisation or acculturation. These four strategies are illustrated by Pio (2005). Pio states that a person who retains a strong ethnic identity and who also identifies with the host society is considered to have an *integrated* identity. An individual who has a strong ethnic identity and who rejects or does not identify with the new culture is said to have a *separated* identity. One who gives up their previous ethnic identity and only identifies with the new culture is deemed to have an *assimilated* identity. For the individual who identifies with none of those and is deculturated, the term *marginalised* identity applies. A number of scholars (see Berry, 1990; Phinney et al., 2001, cited in Pio 2005a) say that some contexts support the possibility of integration and make it easier to develop a bicultural identity, whereas other contexts make this resolution difficult. Additionally, the scholars (Berry, 1990; Phinney et al., 2001, cited in Pio 2005a) posit that some contexts may foster separation rather than integration. They also assert that when immigrants are neither provided with the encouragement nor allowed to retain their own culture while they attempt to integrate into the new society, they are likely to feel they must choose between separation and assimilation.

It is instructive to note Berry's (1990) argument that the four acculturation strategies are not discrete, static strategies but that in practice, individuals may switch from one strategy to another (van Oudenhoven et al., 2006). Although Berry's (1990) study on the four acculturation strategies is considered influential, nonetheless his work has received criticism, particularly in relation to the concept of marginalisation. Critics argue that marginalisation is not a viable concept since migrants do not choose to be marginalised; rather they may have no choice but to be involuntarily forced to adopt it as an outcome (van Oudenhoven et al., 2006).

Over the years, there have been several theoretical models describing the process of acculturation, which includes changes in attitudes, values, behaviours, language and cultural identity. More recently, however, acculturation researchers have emphasised the importance of the *receiving*

society in the acculturation processes adopted by immigrants (van Oudenhoven et al., 2006). Early studies of acculturation adopted a one dimensional approach in which immigrants were seen as relinquishing identification with their culture of origin and moving gradually toward identification with the host culture by adopting the cultural norms, values, attitudes and behaviours of the host society (see Ramirez, 1984). It was felt that the unidimensional approach was too simplistic and that identification with home and host culture had come to be viewed as counterbalancing forces. This gave rise to a balance model of acculturation in which biculturalism was viewed as the middle ground (van Oudenhoven et al., 2006).

Some researchers argue that acculturation is a multidimensional process backed up by two assumptions (Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000). The first assumption views acculturation as functioning in various separate domains, such as attitudes, values, behaviours, language and cultural identity. Taking this view, immigrants may relate to their heritage and host cultures to different degrees in these various domains. As an example, they may be fluent in the new national language of the host country, but could still continue to identify with the values that are predominant in their country or origin. The second assumption relates to home and host cultures as independent domains as typified by Berry's (1980, 1997) classification of four acculturation strategies mentioned earlier.

Teske & Nelson (1974, cited in Padilla & Perez, 2003) offered the first psychological perspective on acculturation. According to Teske & Nelson, although acculturation involves various changes in a person, including material traits, behaviour patterns, norms, and institutional changes, the most important element by far involves changes in the person's values. In their study of psychological acculturation, Padilla & Perez's (2003) find that psychological acculturation means "the internal processes of change that immigrants experience when they come into direct contact with members of the host culture" (p. 35).

The proliferation of academic literature on acculturation clearly indicates that this topic drew a vast amount of scholarly interest over the past many decades and which continues to this day. The early study by Redfield, Linton & Herskovits (1936, cited in Berry, 1997; Padilla & Perez, 2003) posits that it is the continuous first-hand contact between groups of individuals of different cultures that is the essential ingredient of acculturation. Berry states that in principle, acculturation is a neutral term; however, in practice, acculturation tends to induce more change in one of the groups than in the other (Berry, 1990; Berry, 1997). However, Padilla & Perez's (2003) literature review below yield different perspectives, thus leading Padilla & Perez to argue that acculturation is more complicated and not merely the outcome of two cultural groups being in contact with each other.

There are a variety of factors that influence the different ways in which people acculturate (Padilla & Perez, 2003), which may impact on their acculturation strategy. The factors include family structure and function, adherence to certain religious beliefs and practices, gender, power relationships between the majority and minority groups, personality and behaviour characteristics, and age of onset of intergroup contact. Padilla & Perez (2003) believe that if the immigrants possess more knowledge of the host cultures, then they are more likely to become acculturated. Immigrants' early experience while interacting with the host society is a major factor. Some immigrants may experience more social discrimination because of their minority status. Ethnicity, race, religion, language, and/or dress often distinguish many immigrants from the host country's culture.

Another factor is that some immigrants may be more inclined to undergo cultural changes as a matter of survival due to political, social, and/or economic reasons and under such circumstances, such immigrants will reason that it is beneficial for them to make certain types of cultural adaptation (Marin, 1993 as cited in Padilla & Perez, 2003). Berry (1997, cited in Padilla & Perez, 2003) states that minority status of the immigrant is an important determinant, both in terms of smaller numbers and lower status and, consequently, lower power in the host society. Triandis, Kashima,

Shimada & Villareal (1986, as cited in Padilla & Perez, 2003) found that the more power the immigrant group has in its new environment in the host society, the less the immigrant group will conform to the new cultural norms.

From a New Zealand perspective, Ritchie (2003) finds evidence of the earliest acculturation efforts of the first Chinese. The excavation of Chinese sites revealed that the early Chinese made notable efforts in the acculturative process. According to Ritchie, the adoption of Western-style clothing probably represents the most voluntary acculturative response of the Chinese miners in New Zealand. They quickly adopted European miners' working clothes and boots to combat the cold conditions, and employed similar tools for winning gold, such as picks, shovels, pans and cradles. Further, Ritchie asserts that archaeological evidence and ethnohistorical records indicate that the Chinese miners attempted to maintain their traditional material culture and lifestyle. The changes that the Chinese miners made were few and only for practical purposes. Being a practical people, the Chinese miners readily adopted European things they considered useful. Although they managed to adopt the trappings of the Anglo-European majority, they maintained their 'Chinese-ness' where it mattered most – in social behaviour, religious beliefs and philosophy.

It is important to point out that Redfield et al. (1936), however, held that acculturation did not automatically mean that assimilation would follow. The following sections discuss the literature reviewed on the different aspects of assimilation, adaptation and integration, in relation to acculturation and its strategies.

2.3.3 Assimilation

According to Lustig & Koester (1996), assimilation is said to have occurred when a person has taken on the new culture's beliefs, values, and norms. Expanding that further, Lustig & Koester also maintain that assimilation occurs when a person deems it relatively unimportant to maintain one's

original cultural identity; rather, it is important to establish and maintain relationships with other cultures. Extending the work of Lustig & Koester (1996), Berry (1997, p. 9) asserts that assimilation occurs “when individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures”.

Van den Berghe (1981) argues that a desire for assimilation is often motivated from an initial position of perceived inequality, so that assimilation will reap some benefit. However, as van den Berghe’s (1981, p. 217) points out: “.....it takes two to assimilate. Assimilation is sought by members of the sub-ordinate group – granted by members of the dominant group. For assimilation to take place, therefore, it takes a convergence of desire for it from the subordinates and acceptance by the dominants.” However, Chan (2005) points out that the willingness to be assimilated cannot be taken for granted either theoretically or empirically.

The early New Zealand Chinese communities, eager to be accepted and fearful of rocking the boat, tended to keep a low profile (Ip, 1996). They lived in constant awareness that their acceptance in New Zealand was hard-earned and conditional. Being members of a minority group, ethnic Chinese tend to seek acceptance, recognition and approval from the dominant group (Ip, 2003b), thus in the 1960s and 1970s, the Chinese worked towards assimilation into the dominant white culture of New Zealand (Yee, 2001, cited in Ip, 2003b). While there are obvious gains, assimilation may come at a cost to the individual. In the case of the ethnic migrant Chinese, with assimilation came the paradoxical loss of language and the loosening of traditional cultural ties (Wong, 2003).

2.3.4 Adaptation

Adaptation is understood in terms of the acquisition of the culture-specific skills required not only to survive but to also thrive in a new and foreign environment (Bochner, 1972). According to Earley (2002), adaptation

“reflects a person’s capability to acquire or adapt behaviours appropriate for a new culture” (p. 279).

Immigrants, and sojourners, learn to adapt to their changed circumstances to the host country environment, finding new ways of handling their daily life. In the process, they may unconsciously modify their cognitive, affective, and behavioural habits, and acquire increasing proficiency in expressing themselves, understanding the host cultural practices, and aligning thoughts and actions with those of the local people. All these translate to an internal growth in the immigrants or sojourners (Kim, 1988; Kim & Ruben, 1988). Many will discover that one significant element, their language proficiency or otherwise, will be central to how quickly they adapt to the host country. According to Kim (1994b), immigrants and sojourners will discover the adaptation process is achieved mainly through communication.

According to Berry (1980), as individuals acculturate, various changes occur – a number of behaviours are modified, together with attitudes, beliefs, and values. Berry proposes that immigrants undergo a process of change in at least six areas of psychological functioning (language, cognitive styles, personality, identity, attitudes, and acculturative stress). Further, Berry (1980), posits that after some initial changes the individual reaches a stage of conflict, at which point an adaptation strategy is used.

Berry (1980, cited in Padilla & Perez, 2003) identifies several varieties of adaptation which are assimilation, integration, rejection, and deculturation. Berry’s (1980) work takes into consideration the importance of multicultural societies, minority individuals and groups, and the significant fact that individuals have choices, such as what they wish to achieve in the acculturation process. Most noteworthy in Berry’s study is the author’s contention that a minority person and/or ethnic group could reverse their acculturation process to the dominant group and return to their former cultural heritage. Support for this statement is found in Fishman (2001, cited in Padilla & Perez, 2003) who states that there are many cases of ethnic groups who managed to revive their ancestral language and culture.

Research on immigrants has yielded insights into the problems of adaptation, issues on ethnic discrimination from the host society, racism, and issues relating to identity management and cultural change (Eriksen, 2002). Eriksen asserts that groups who look different from dominant groups may be less liable to become assimilated into the majority than others, even if they wish to, for it can be difficult for them to escape from their ethnic identity. In this case, as well as in the case where minority groups have an inadequate command of the dominant language, their ethnic identity becomes an important and distinctive status and an ascribed aspect of their personhood. For migrants, even though the speed of social and cultural change varies from person to person and for some the change occurs quickly, people tend to retain their ethnic identity despite having moved to a new environment (Eriksen, 2002).

Immigrants acculturate (learn) new cultural practices and deculturate (unlearn) at least some of their old cultural norms. The quality and quantity of communication that strangers have with the host environment critically impact on the different rates of their adaptive change, since all the learning and unlearning occurs via communication interfaces between the stranger and the host environment.

Newcomers or strangers' ethnic backgrounds also influence their cross-cultural adaptation process by impacting on the ease or difficulty with which the person is able to develop the communication competence in a given host society and participate in its social communication activities (Kim, 1994b). However, language competency is not the only challenge faced by people from ethnic backgrounds. There are also the physical or physiological differences that set them apart. This difference may impact on the psychological preparedness of natives to embrace them into their social networks (Kim, 1994b). In short, ethnic characteristics may be "handicaps" (Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992, p. 145) and impact negatively or impede the progression of the adaptation process.

The environment in the host society and its communities impacts directly on newcomers' adaptation experience. The environmental characteristics may be categorised as: (1) host receptivity; and (2) ethnic group strength (Kim, 1994b). The receptivity of the host environment refers to the "degree to which the environment is open to, welcomes, and accepts strangers into its social communication networks and offers them various forms of informational, technical, material, and emotional support" (p. 397). Host receptivity is underpinned by their perceptions and worldviews on such issues as: (1) the nature of the relationships – whether friendly or hostile – between the host country and the stranger's home country; (2) cultural and ideological differences and incompatibility; (3) status and power of the stranger's home country and culture; (4) economic, social and political standing of the stranger's ethnic group within the host society; (5) economic, social and political threat to the host society by the stranger's ethnic group; and (6) the racial or ethnic prejudices held by the society against strangers generally or a particular ethnic group. Different host environments show different levels of acceptance of strangers and their ethnic characteristics.

Additionally, Kim (1998) finds that a very strong network of ethnic friendships may slow down the process of adaptation. Ward, Bochner, & Furnham (2001, cited in Berry & Ward, 2006) advanced Kim's theory by adding that there are broader factors that predict sociocultural adaptation. They include previous intercultural experience, training, length of residence in the new culture, amount of contact with host nationals, and cultural distance. The description of a culturally intelligent individual is one who is "able to adapt personal behaviours to be consistent with those of others so as to put them at ease" (Earley, 2002, p. 290). Interestingly, it has been documented from historical records that ethnic migrant Chinese displayed several of these characteristics when they first arrived in New Zealand as sojourners to work in the goldmines (Ritchie, 2003). According to Ritchie (2003), early writers have portrayed the Chinese in New Zealand as a frugal, adaptive people who retained their customs as much as possible. Archaeological investigations support this impression and provide specific insights and information as to how the Chinese made adjustments to adapt to their new environment.

Regardless of their heritage and culture, newcomers (strangers, sojourners, refugees, or voluntary immigrants) must adapt to their new cultural environment in one way or another (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001 as cited in Padilla & Perez, 2003). Kim (1994b) described the stress-adaptation-growth dynamic experienced by newcomers as they try to face challenges in the unfamiliar environment in the host society. Stress, appraisal, and coping responses are viewed as important elements of the acculturation process, and adaptation is typically defined in terms of psychological wellbeing or satisfaction (Berry, 1990, 1997, 2003, cited in Berry & Ward, 2006).

2.3.5 Integration

Integration is said to have occurred when an individual or group retains its original cultural identity while maintaining harmonious relationships with other cultures (Lustig & Koester, 1996). Consistent with Lustig & Koester's work, Berry (1997) adds that with integration, "some degree of cultural integrity is maintained by the individual or group, while at the same time seeking to participate as an integral part of the larger social network" (p. 9). It means there are distinguishable cultural groups that work cooperatively to ensure that the society and the individuals within it continue to function well. Promoting harmony is a common feature shared by both integration and assimilation which results in an appropriate fit of individuals and groups into the larger, dominant culture (Lustig & Koester, 1996).

Kim & Ruben (1988) state that some individuals have the skills and abilities to move easily among many cultures. These individuals generally have a great deal of respect for others' different viewpoints and are able to understand and communicate appropriately and effectively with people from a variety of cultures. Such individuals have the ability to project a sense of self that transcends any particular cultural group. Kim & Ruben (1988) use the term intercultural transformation to describe the process by which individuals move beyond their original cultural conditioning to incorporate other cultural realities. The authors point out that this does not mean that

such individuals are culture-free or cultureless; rather, they are not rigidly bound by membership to any one particular culture. An off-shoot of an intercultural transformation is a cognitive structure that allows for a broadened and deepened understanding of human conditions and cultural differences. In turn, it is likely that the increased cognitive depth and breadth will facilitate corresponding emotional and behavioural capacities as well. In the words of Ip, (2003b) "It should be recognised that different family members will have different degrees of integration according to their specific needs at certain stages of their development" (p. 208).

For many immigrants, the acculturation process can be highly stressful experience, whether it is assimilation, adaptation, or integration into the host society. Hence, it is of significant relevance to this study that the literature on culture shock and accompanying stress is reviewed.

2.4 Culture, Culture Shock and Stress

Before reviewing the scholastic literature on culture shock, it is necessary to start from the base of understanding what culture is. To this end, the abundance of literature on culture as well as culture shock and its accompanying stresses are reviewed in the following sub-sections.

2.4.1 Culture

Culture is defined as a historically transmitted system of symbols, meanings, and norms (Collier & Thomas, 1988). Porter & Samovar (1994) describe culture as an abstract, complex and pervasive matrix of social elements. McLaren (1998) describes culture as a human phenomenon, stating that culture is learned and passed on from generation to generation. Culture is not fixed and it includes, but is not limited to, attitudes toward family, work, education, marriage, leisure, time, appearance, attire, and food. According to Harris & Moran (1991), culture helps people to make sense of things and happenings within their environment. It facilitates living by offering ready-

made solutions to problems by establishing patterns of relations, and ways for preserving group cohesion and consensus. More importantly, culture provides a people with identity. Harris & Moran (1991) went on to say that from its value system, a culture sets standards of behaviour for that society. Their study finds that in some cultures conventions dictate and may be expressed in gift-giving (birth, death and marriage rituals), showing respect or deference, expressing good manners.

Lustig & Koester (1996) define culture as “a learned set of shared perceptions about beliefs, values, and norms, which affect the behaviours of a relatively large group of people (p. 35). The authors assert that “humans are not born with the genetic imprint of a particular culture” (p. 35); instead, culture is learned from the interactions and socialisation with other people – parents, other family members, friends, and even strangers who are part of the culture.

Cultures, and by extension cultural values, are defined as the “shared way of life of a group of people” (Berry, 2004, p. 167) or as the “rich complex of meanings, beliefs, practices, symbols, norms and values commonly shared among people in a society” (Schwartz, 2003).

According to Hofstede, cultures can be defined as an aggregate of shared belief systems between different social groups, and are usually demarcated at a geographical or national level. Cultures represent “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from another” (Hofstede, 1980, p. 21).

Tradition is a significant and important aspect of culture, expressions of which may include unwritten customs, taboos, and sanctions. Harris & Moran (1991) posit that tradition can programme a people as to what is deemed proper or improper behaviour and includes procedures relative to food, dress, what to value, avoid, or de-emphasise. The authors state that traditions provide a people with a “mindset” and have a powerful influence on their moral system for judging what is right or wrong, good or bad, desirable or

undesirable. Traditions express a particular culture, providing its members with a sense of belonging and uniqueness (Harris & Moran, 1991).

McLaren (1998) posits that when people come from a different cultural background where their values and native tongue are different, they may find it difficult, if not impossible, to conform to local conventions and practices. The author believes that if the newcomers know that their diverse cultures are valued and understood, they will be more accepting of the challenging difficulties. Further, by recognising one's own culture and respecting the culture of others, one can further the understanding of the cultural differences, by developing the knowledge to understand how others think, the empathy to sense how others feel, and the necessary skills to cope with differences with flexibility. As newcomers become less new, they absorb aspects of the host culture (McLaren, 1998). Hall (1992) describes cultural identity as 'movable' and that it is not fixed, that it continues to change as people interact with others.

Cultural values have played a small but significant role in acculturation research, particularly in those investigations that have looked in depth into the experiences of sojourners and immigrants (Leong & Ward, 2006) with respect to value changes (Rosenthal, Bell, Demetriou, & Efklides, 1989). Cultural values may be seen as underpinning, shaping and justifying individuals' affect, behaviours and cognitions (Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Schwartz, 2003).

2.4.2 Culture Shock

Culture shock is also described as the "disorientation that comes from being plunged into an unfamiliar setting (McLaren, 1998, p. 9). In an unfamiliar culture, everything that the newcomer experiences is different and subsequently, they may feel incompetent, confused, and anxious. Other studies (Gudykunst & Kim, 1992; Taft, 1977) describe the symptoms as fatigue from constant adaptation to the local culture, angry and irritable

behaviour, anxiety, insomnia, sense of loss of friends and home comforts, familiar food, rejection of the host people or rejection by them, confusion over values or identity, discomfort and tension arising from it, as well as a feeling of not being in control in dealing with the unfamiliar environment. Adler (1987) advances that culture shock may lead to self-development and personal growth and feels that it is the newcomer's responsibility to adapt to it. Adler asserts that the very act of adapting to the culture shock is at the heart of a cross-cultural learning experience, an experience which leads to self-understanding and change.

While experiencing culture shock, people's self-esteem is often seriously impaired. As defensive mechanisms, they may withdraw into their own reference group or into themselves, filter out or misperceive stimuli, use rationalisation or over-compensation, or they may become aggressive or hostile. All such defences are not conducive to effective communication (Pedersen & Pedersen, 1994).

According to Dodd (1991), there are four possible ways of coping with culture shock: fight, flight, filter, and flex. Dodd describes 'filtering' as accepting the things one wants to accept, so denying some aspects of reality, whereas 'flexing' is trying everything with a positive attitude, this being the only way that leads to final balanced acceptance of the new culture. After this, it is likely that adaptation and acculturation may occur.

Kim (1994b) likened stress as part-and-parcel of the immigrants' or sojourners' adaptation and growth, which increases the chances of successfully meeting the demands of living in the host environment.

Some authors (Pedersen & Pedersen, 1994; Porter & Samovar 1994) state that the intercultural situation can be highly stressful, from a physical as well as mental perspective. This is consistent with Kim's (1994b) findings who posits that the physical uprooting from their familiar native homeland into a foreign one in which the language, food, local customs and culture make day-to-day existence in the host country is a challenge which often exacts an

emotional and physical toll on immigrants and sojourners' personal and family life while they adapt. These inevitably produce stressful experiences of temporary psychic disturbance or "breakdown" (Barna, 1983; Dyal & Dyal, 1981; Kim, 1988; Moos, 1976). Various defense mechanisms may be displayed such as hostility, cynicism, avoidance, and withdrawal (Lazarus, 1966). It is well summarised by Barna (1983):

....the innate physiological makeup of the human animal is such that discomfort of varying degrees occurs in the presence of alien stimuli. Without the normal props of one's own culture there is unpredictability, helplessness, a threat to self-esteem, and a general feeling of "walking on ice" – all of which are stress producing (pp. 42-43).

2.5 Role of Personality in Adaptation/Acculturation

Why do some people adapt better and faster than others? According to Kim (1994b), the reasons may lie in a person's predisposition or adaptive potential (Kim, 1979), underpinned by the person's preparedness, ethnicity; and personality. Personality includes self-image, self-identity and self-esteem. According to Kim, preparedness refers to acquiring skills, competencies and knowledge of the host culture before moving to the host country. Such skills and competencies – linguistic, cognitive, affective and operational – are at a level that enables strangers to participate in the activities and interact with natives in the host country. Kim's (1979) conclusions are consistent with Lustig & Koester's (1996) who argue that the rate and degree of adjustment to another culture vary greatly between individuals. They also assert that it varies from situation to situation in response to the environment in question. These are consistent with Kim & Ruben's (1988) findings in which they maintain that some individuals have the skills and abilities to move easily among many cultures.

The literature reveals that some migrants have an easier time acculturating but others may feel that obstacles are always in their way. A person's disposition, attitude, and personality have significance, for example, in their

study, Padilla & Perez (2003) claim that individual differences and personality characteristics are two important facets which have to be taken into consideration when advancing theories on immigrants' acculturation. To these authors, individual differences and personality characteristics facilitate or retard acculturation. In the same study, Padilla & Perez state that the choice to acculturate may be related to the immigrants' personality characteristics such as assertiveness, likeability, sociability, extroversion, and ego control, as well as differences in the person's attitude and risk taking, and ability to tolerate stress and anxiety. Padilla & Perez (2003) found support in Birman (1994) who also argues for the need to understand and explain individual differences within the demands of different cultural and socio-political contexts.

Immigrants with more distinctive physical features or characteristics in relation to the people in the dominant host society, such as skin colour, facial features and accented English, may find it harder to acculturate (Padilla & Perez, 2003). Perceived as outsiders or "outgroup", such persons may be targets of prejudice and discrimination by the socially dominant "ingroup". Those who are exposed to such negative experiences may consequently be affected emotionally and psychologically and may start questioning and rationalising why they should want to adapt to the host society. It follows then that this same group of immigrants may also have less contact with "insiders". The limited contact with, and exposure to, people in the host society may in turn limit the immigrants opportunities for successful adaptation (Padilla & Perez, 2003). This is consistent with an early study by Steele & Aronson (1995), who state that if immigrants believe they are being discriminated against or negatively perceived by the dominant social group in the host society on account of their physical and other differences such as accented English, they are more disinclined to attempt acculturation. On the work front, such discrimination may exact high costs on interpersonal and working relationships and create negative outcomes for the organisation (Crossby, 1982 as cited in Padilla & Perez, 2003).

In a review of managing cultural differences, Harris & Moran (1991) assert that people who are sensitive to cultural differences appreciate a people's distinctiveness, and seek to make allowances for such factors when communicating with people of a different cultural group (Harris & Moran, 1991). He or she avoids trying to impose one's own cultural attitudes and approaches upon these 'foreigners.' By respecting the cultural differences of others, people avoid being labelled "ethnocentric" (Harris & Moran, 1991). In the same vein, the authors feel that through cross-cultural experiences, people become more broadminded and tolerant of cultural "peculiarities." As a consequence, people gain new insights for improving human relations and also become aware of the impact of their native culture on people. Cultural understanding may minimise the impact of culture shock, and maximise intercultural experiences. A manager with such cultural understanding could use this understanding to optimise organisational effectiveness in a multi-cultural working environment. Harris & Moran (1991) maintain that to effectively manage cultural differences, the very first step in the process is to increase one's general cultural awareness.

Tolerance for ambiguity relates to a how a person responds to new, uncertain, and unpredictable intercultural experiences. There are some who will react to new situations with greater comfort than others, whereas some will respond negatively with extreme nervousness, anger, frustration and even with hostility toward the new situations, as well as to people who may be present in them. Yet others will embrace the new situations and view them as a challenge and these are the ones who appear to do well whenever the unexpected or unpredictable arises, adapting quickly to the changing demands in the environment (Lustig & Koester, 1996).

The personality traits/dispositions of strangers, such as openness and strength, are good indicators of how readily or quickly they work through the adaptation process in the host society. Openness is defined as a person's internal posture that is receptive to new information (Gendlin, 1962, 1978) and it is this disposition that enables strangers to minimise their resistance and maximise their willingness to accept the new and changed

circumstances, and to perceive and interpret various events and situations in the new environment as they occur. Used in this context, the term openness denotes flexibility, open-mindedness, tolerance for ambiguity, and an orientation towards optimism and an affirmative outlook, thus enabling strangers to continually seek to acquire new cultural knowledge. The other personality trait is strength, a concept which broadly covers personality attributes such as resilience, risk-taking, hardiness, persistence, patience, and resourcefulness. Thus, individuals with a strong and open personality disposition are more likely to face challenges successfully and are better equipped to develop host communication competence, and in so doing, facilitate their own intercultural transformation and growth while they go through the adaptive process in the host society (Kim, 1994b). Conversely, individuals lacking such qualities will experience a slower adaptive journey, thereby self-imposing psychological barriers against their own cross-cultural adaptation process (Hettema, 1979).

2.5.1 Self-image and Self-esteem

Negative experiences affect a person's self-image, with their values denied or their self-esteem undermined. Self-esteem threat involves situations in which "favourable views about oneself are questioned, contradicted, impugned, mocked, challenged, or otherwise put in jeopardy" (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996, p. 8). A threat to one's self-image is similar but involves being denied the image, identity, or "face" that one overtly claims during an interaction (Goffman, 1967). Such psychological damage which occurs during interaction may bring up negative feelings of others' trustworthiness, and negative emotions such as stress, anxiety, and fear (Williams, 2007). Scholars (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Williams, 2001; Zand, 1972) defined trust as one's willingness to rely on another's actions in situations that involve risks. Gambetta (1988) states that trust is based on a person's expectations of how others will behave in a helpful manner or at the very least not harmful. In turn, these expectations are based

on the person's perceptions of others' trustworthiness – their benevolence, integrity, and ability (Butler, 1991; Mayer et al., 1995).

Tellingly, where there is an existence of trust, it reduces the need to monitor others' behaviour. Interpersonal trust gives rise to tacit knowledge, increased risk sharing, and also richer and freer information exchange (Powell & Smith-Doerr, 1994). Trust facilitates cooperation (Williams, 2007) while actively building personal rapport is positively related to trust (Child & Mollering, 2003). According to Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard & Werner (1998), some of the ways to initiate trust with employees are through communicating accurately and thoroughly, demonstrating concern, and sharing control – all these reflect a proactive stance toward initiating trust.

According to Markus & Kitayama (1991) self-construal is a key individual factor that focuses on individual variation within and between cultures. Self-construal is a person's self-image and consists of an independent and an interdependent self. The independent construal of self takes the view that an individual is a unique entity with an individuated repertoire of feelings, cognitions, and motivations. The difference between that and the interdependent construal of self is that the latter involves an emphasis on the importance of relational connectedness.

Markus & Kitayama (1991) state that a person's placement of a sense of self-concept in his/her culture has a profound influence on his/her communication and interaction with others. According to Markus & Kitayama, the "independent construct of self" includes a sense of ...

oneself as an agent, as a producer of one's actions. One is conscious of being in control over the surrounding situation, and of the need to express one's own thoughts, feelings, and actions of others. Such acts of standing out are often intrinsically rewarding because they elicit pleasant, ego-focused emotions (example, pride) and also reduce unpleasant ones (example, frustration). Furthermore, the acts of standing out, themselves, form an important basis of self-esteem (p. 246).

In contrast to the “independent construct of self”, Markus & Kitayama (1991) also posit that the “interdependent construct of self” as an ...

attentiveness and responsiveness to others that one either explicitly or implicitly assumes will be reciprocated by these others, as well as the wilful management of one's other-focused feelings and desires so as to maintain and further the reciprocal interpersonal relationship. One is conscious of where one belongs with respect to others and assumes a receptive stance toward these others, continually adjusting and accommodating to these others in many aspects of behaviour. Such acts of fitting in and accommodating are often intrinsically rewarding, because they give rise to pleasant, other-focused emotions (example, feeling of connection) while diminishing unpleasant ones (example, shame) and, furthermore, because of the self-restraint required in doing so forms an important basis of self-esteem (p. 246).

Viewed from Markus & Kitayama's (1991) stance, it is logical to assume that people, whether from an independent or interdependent self-construct, would view, evaluate and judge other people's actions, behaviours and speech from that perspective. As Ting-Toomey (1994a) puts it, this “helps people to make sense” or explains why people in some cultures prefer certain approaches or modes of conflict negotiation than people in other cultures” (p. 362).

In specific terms, independence is associated positively with dominating and substantive conflict styles, whereas interdependence is associated positively with avoiding and relational conflict modes (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). The study by a different scholar (Oetzel, 1998) found that dominating styles were associated positively with independence, whereas avoiding, obliging, and compromising styles were associated positively with interdependence. Oetzel (1998) states integrating was associated positively with both self-construals, but more strongly with interdependence.

2.6 Communication Competence

There have been studies on the different development process of cross-cultural adaptation, differential adaptation rates or speeds at which different

strangers adapt to alien cultures and customs (Kim, 1994b). So what may be some of the ways that would facilitate the adaptation journey of strangers in the host country? Kim (1994b) offers that communication is a vital element wherein lies the heart of cross-cultural adaptation because adaptation occurs through the communication interface between the stranger and the host environment. It is only through communication that strangers can come to learn the significant symbols of the host culture, and thereby organise their own and others' activities successfully.

Communication is defined as a symbolic process in which people create shared meanings, whereas interpersonal communication is a form of communication where individuals interact directly with each other (Lustig & Koester, 1996). According to Porter & Samovar (1994), communication is assumed to be a form of human behaviour and that communicating and interacting between human beings is a basic social need. This is reinforced by Carbaugh (1990) who views communication as a primary social process. Communication is deemed to have occurred whenever a person responds to another's behaviour and attaches meaning to it regardless of whether the behaviour was conscious or unconscious, intentional or unintentional (Porter & Samovar, 1994).

Communication is the process of encoding and decoding verbal and non-verbal information (Kim, 1994b). Communication can be broken down into personal communication and social communication (Ruben, 1975). "Personal communication can be thought of as sensing, making-sense-of, and acting toward the objects and people in one's milieu. It is the process by which the individual informationally fits himself into ... his environment" (pp. 168-169). In the context of cross-cultural adaptation, personal communication can be viewed from the perspective of "host communication competence" (Kim, 1994b, p. 394); in other words, the overall internal capacity of a stranger to decode and encode information in relation to the host cultural practices of communication. For the locals, this process is acquired and internalised from a young age and thus operated on an unconscious and instinctive level (Kim, 1994b). However, this is not so for strangers. For strangers, the whole

communication process, complete with symbols and nuances, has to be observed, learned and practised.

Host communication competence refers to various facets, including the knowledge about the host language and social norms. It also refers to the ability to manage interpersonal relationships to solve impending problems at work, and can be grouped into three categories: cognitive, affective, and operational or behavioural (Kim, 1991a; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). The first category, cognitive competence, refers to the knowledge of the host language and understanding of the unique use of phrases and nuances, its history and culture, laws and regulations, societal norms and practices, beliefs, and rules of social conduct (Kim, 1994b). Linguistic and cultural knowledge lead to the development of cognitive sophistication (Kelly, 1955; Schroder, Driver, & Streufert, 1967), that is, the structural differentiation and integration in an individual's information-processing capacity. Kim (1994b) advances that during the initial phase of adaptation, a stranger's perception of the host culture is relatively simple, using stereotyping to make sense of their unfamiliar environment. With the passage of time, and as the stranger learns more about the host culture and customs, his or her perception goes through some adjustments which enable him or her to participate in the host social processes with more meaning and understanding.

The second category, affective competence, facilitates cross-cultural adaptation by providing an emotional and motivational capability to handle the various challenges of living in the host society. Affective competence includes the strangers' willingness and determination to learn the host language and culture, ability to understand and empathise with and participate in the emotional and aesthetic sensibilities of the natives, their attitude toward their host country and toward themselves (Kim, 1994b). The author affirms that strangers who adopt positive feelings, genuine interest and respect toward the host society are likely to experience less prejudice against the natives and they of them. On the other hand, strangers lacking in affective competence feel insecure or confused about themselves, the host

environment, their own cultural identity, and thus feel “marginal” (Stonequist, 1935).

The third and last category, operational competence, refers to the strangers’ proficiency in the outward expressions of their cognitive and affective experiences when communicating with others. Strangers’ operational competence is underpinned by their cognitive and affective competencies. The decision for any action is based on their currently acquired knowledge about the host culture, language, the degree of sophistication in their information-processing capacity, as well as their capacity and willingness to appreciate, empathise, and participate in the emotions and aesthetic experiences of the natives. Acquiring the operational competence enables strangers to choose the appropriate combination of verbal and non-verbal activities to meet the demands of daily occurrences, such as face-to-face interpersonal interactions, initiating and maintaining relationships, addressing and solving problems and sourcing ways to meet goals and objectives (Kim, 1994b).

Strangers’ host communication competence is intertwined with their participation in the social communication processes of the host society (Kim, 1986, 1987). Social communication offers strangers the chance to develop their communication competence – cognitively, affectively, and behaviourally – especially interpersonal direct face-to-face communication. This allows strangers to secure vital information and insight into the mindset, worldviews and behaviours of the natives; on the other hand, interacting face-to-face with natives will advance their learning about themselves in their interactions with others thus providing them with much needed emotional support and points of reference for checking and validating their own thoughts, actions and behaviours (Kim, 1994b).

2.6.1 Eastern and Western Communication Patterns

The Western view fosters the development of autonomous individuals with strong ego identification. The Eastern view emphasises conformity and submission of the individual to the group. Members of the group are encouraged to maintain group harmony by minimising competition and conflict. Individuality is discouraged while moderation and modesty are praised. In contrast, the West encourages individuality and individual needs to override the group (Kim, 1991b). As anthropologist Hsu (1981) states, individualism is a central theme of the Western personality, which distinguishes the Western world from the non-Western.

From an Eastern perspective, the interpersonal dimension resides primarily in the subtle, implicit, non-verbal, contextual realm and is understood aesthetically and intuitively. The Eastern communicator does not rely on verbalised, logical expressions; rather, the individual “grasps” the elements of the communication dynamics by observing the various non-verbal and circumstantial cues that may be conscious or unconscious. Intuition rather than logical reasoning is significant in the Eastern interpersonal understanding of how one talks, addresses the other and why, on what topics, and in what varied styles, context and circumstances. Verbal articulation is less significant than non-verbal, contextual sensitivity and appropriateness. Eastern cultures favour verbal hesitance and ambiguity so as to avoid offending others (Cathcart & Cathcart, 1976; Doi, 1976). Silence is often preferred to eloquent verbalisation even in expressing strong compliments or affection; in fact, too much verbal praise or compliments may be viewed by some with suspicion of its authenticity. From the Eastern perspective, true feelings are intuitively apparent and therefore need not be articulated. Contrast that to the Western communicative pattern which is primarily direct, explicit, verbal and underscored heavily by logical and rational perception, thinking, and articulation. Western communicators are viewed as distinct individuals who express their individuality by way of verbal

articulation and assertiveness. Internal feelings are generally verbalised and discussed clearly rather than comprehended intuitively.

The above differences in communication patterns in the Eastern and the Western traditions are consistent with the notion of “high-context” and “low-context” communication as proposed by Hall (1976), based on Hall’s empirical studies of many cultures. More prevalent in the West than in the East, low-context communication is a term used to describe that most of the interpersonal information is carried out in an explicit and verbalised manner.

Of the various factors affecting migrant settlement, none is more significant than the ability to communicate effectively in the dominant language of the host society. Numerous studies have identified the importance of English language proficiency (in New Zealand’s case) as a factor in determining social and economic settlement outcomes. English is the dominant language in New Zealand, spoken by 95.9 percent of the people. After English, the most common language in New Zealand is Maori, spoken by 4.1 percent of the people (Census 2006, Statistics New Zealand). Described by some authors as a fundamental aspect of settlement, language proficiency is both a factor affecting integration as well as an indicator of its success. Moreover, qualitative studies show that it is even recognised by non-English speaking background migrants themselves as a key element of successful integration (see Lidgard, 1996; Ip, Wu & Inglis, 1998, cited in Fletcher, 1999). As succinctly put by Boyd, DeVries & Simkin (1994, p. 549, cited in Fletcher, 1999):

In any society, newcomers face a series of tasks: obtaining information about the new environment; understanding the practices and institutions which exist; and participating in these new social and economic settings. For immigrants who arrive without proficiency in the language of the host society, formidable barriers can exist in the undertaking of these tasks

Fletcher (1999) also found considerable consistency in the research findings relating to language proficiency. Findings indicate that migrants with higher levels of dominant language fluency have higher average labour force participation rates and lower unemployment rates. The findings also confirm

language proficiency as a critical factor in terms of how readily migrants integrate into the labour market. Proficiency in the dominant language of the migrant-receiving country provides a means of learning about society and engenders a feeling of belonging. As well as the direct impact on social interaction, language problems spill over into other aspects of social integration such as confidence in accessing government and other services.

In summing up the findings, Fletcher (1999) says that English language proficiency is necessary for migrants to communicate well with people outside their own linguistic background. It is, and will be, an important factor for nearly all migrants. The lack of proficiency in the everyday language of the host society may prove a stumbling block as well as a source of anguish and frustration for migrants (see Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1990). For instance, in a study conducted in New Zealand, Lidgard, Ho, Chen, Goodwin, & Bedford (1998) cite the instance of a Korean woman who lamented on her frustrations for not being able to communicate her deepest thoughts.

2.6.2 Intercultural Communication

Technological advances in both communication and transportation, globalisation of the economy and changes in immigration patterns have transformed the world into a global village (Porter & Samovar, 1994). The authors claim that such changes led to other significant changes in both worldwide and local patterns of communication and interaction between people, and are of primary concern to the study of intercultural communication. Researchers believe that intercultural communication is fraught with difficulties (Andersen, 1994; Porter & Samovar, 1994), and that even when the natural barrier of a foreign language has disappeared, people can still fail to understand each other (Porter & Samovar, 1994).

Culture is a critical concept to communication scholars because every communicator is a product of her or his culture. Along with traits, situations, and states, culture is a primary source of interpersonal behaviour (Andersen,

1987). Culture has an enduring influence and considerable force on one's behaviour, including one's interpersonal communication behaviour. In fact, a person's culture is one of the most powerful and invisible shapers of behaviour (Andersen, 1994). A number of scholars have drawn a parallel between culture and communication, asserting that culture and communication are inseparable because culture is both learned and maintained through human interaction (Andersen, Lustig & Andersen, 1986; Prosser, 1978; Saral, 1977). Furthermore, culture is fundamentally a non-verbal phenomenon and primarily communicated implicitly and mostly without awareness, because most aspects of one's culture are learned through observation and imitation rather than clearly enunciated instruction or expression (Hall, 1984).

Although the spoken language is key to communication, cultural experience influences a person's way of speaking and listening, giving rise to a particular linguistic style. Linguistic style refers to a person's characteristic speaking pattern – directness or indirectness, pauses, expressions or types of words used, and the use of jokes, figures of speech, stories, questions, and apologies (Tannen, 1995). Tannen describes linguistic style as a set of culturally learned signals which include ethnic background; for example, ethnicity, country or region of origin, influence the length of a pause. As a form of social behaviour, language also negotiates relationships since, through the different ways of speaking, the relative status of speakers and their level of rapport are signalled and established. As linguistic style reflects status, it plays a role in placing individuals in a hierarchy. People in authority are likely to reward styles similar to theirs, believing in the logic of their own styles as self-evident. For managers, a better understanding of linguistic style will make them better listeners and communicators (Tannen, 1995).

Intercultural communication takes place when two or more individuals with different cultural backgrounds interact with each other (Andersen, 1994). According to Andersen, this process is rarely smooth and seldom without problems. However, not sharing a common language is a significant barrier but one that is not unsurmountable (Andersen, 1994), as languages can be

learned (Andersen, 1994; Porter & Samovar, 1994). Non-verbal communication is a subtle, multi-dimensional, and usually spontaneous process (Andersen, 1986), and as such, individuals are mostly not conscious of their own non-verbal behaviour (Andersen, 1986; Burgoon, 1985; Samovar & Porter, 1985). Since we are not usually aware of our own non-verbal behaviour, it is extremely difficult to identify and master the non-verbal behaviour of another culture (Andersen, 1994).

Culture and communication are inexorably linked because culture is both learned and maintained through human interaction (Porter & Samovar, 1994; Prosser, 1978; Saral, 1977). To understand intercultural communication is to understand the linkage between communication and culture. A person's communication style is influenced by his/her own culture (Porter & Samovar, 1994) and acquired at a very early age.

A cultural "universe of discourse" is created by and for its members, providing a way in which people can interpret and make sense of their experience before conveying it to one another. It requires a common system of codifying sensations without which all efforts to share meanings is impossible. This universal discourse – a precious cultural legacy – is transmitted to each generation consciously and unconsciously. A good example is found in parents and teachers giving explicit instruction in it by praising or criticising certain types of behaviour. The most significant aspect of any cultural code may be conveyed implicitly (Barnlund, 1975; Hall, 1984), not by any formal rule or lesson but through modelling behaviour (Barnlund, 1975). Culture is fundamentally a non-verbal phenomenon as it is absorbed largely unconsciously through observations and imitation (Andersen, 1994). Barnlund (1975) maintains that this makes one's own cultural assumptions, behaviours, attitudes, and biases hard to recognise as they seem so obviously right that they require no explanation.

Where the cultural system of communication is concerned, it too is historically transmitted and handed down to the next generation of new members. New members learn about past members – heroes, important

precepts, rituals, values, and expectations for conduct – and are taught how to follow the norms and in this way the cultural system is perpetuated (Collier, 1994).

Ng (2007) is convinced that part of the acculturation process involves the adoption of the host language. According to Ng (2007, p. 75), the “process of *language acculturation* would be an enriching experience “and advocates this to be adopted as language policy and practices in schools, workplaces, and so forth. Ng says that for New Zealand Chinese families, and possibly also for many other minority families, language shift is one of the consequence of the process of acculturation. He proposes that acculturation affects not only the gain or loss of specific languages, but also that culture-linked ways of communicating could undergo subtle and perhaps profound changes in the overall process of acculturation.

Porter & Samovar (1994) identified six characteristics that are important to intercultural communication; that culture is learned, transmissible, dynamic, selective, ethnocentric, and that the facets of culture are interrelated. Pedersen & Pedersen (1994) went further to describe culture as complex social structures which make up communities, societies and nations and that people are the originators of culture. They state that people are the very essence of the culture process and culture in itself is not static. People’s concepts grow more complex and flexible so as to adapt to life, expanding and widening along the way.

The review of literature on intercultural communication above leads logically on to a review of strategies for successful intercultural communication between migrants and the people of the dominant culture in the host society. These strategies are discussed in the following section.

2.6.3 Strategies for Successful Intercultural Communication

For successful intercultural communication, people must be aware of cultural factors affecting communication in both their own culture and in the culture of the other party. People need to understand not only cultural differences, which will help to determine sources of potential problems, but also cultural similarities, which will help to bring each other closer (Porter & Samovar, 1994). Harris & Moran (1991) posit that organisation employees need to learn about culture and cross-cultural communication if they wish to work effectively with people from different cultures and backgrounds, including minorities within their own society, or with foreigners at home or abroad.

In terms of intercultural communication, ethnic Chinese people are ordinarily quite voluble and are constantly maintaining their social world through talk. For the Chinese, silence and deference to other people are used appropriately to show respect (Wong-Scollon & Scollon, 1990). To outsiders or onlookers from another culture, they may wrongly perceive it to be a situation where dominance and subordination is present. However, in other situations, respect is shown by speaking. For example, Chinese children are taught to greet their elders when they wake up in the morning and when they return home (Wong-Scollon & Scollon, 1990).

According to Wong-Scollon & Scollon (1990), intercultural communication between the Chinese and speakers of another language, for instance, English, is further complicated by the difference in common language proficiency. In speaking English, for example, Chinese people may feel handicapped by their own lack of fluency, and unless they have a very good command of the language, they will not be able to express all the ways in which they feel they require a response in order to proceed with the conversation (Wong-Scollon & Scollon, 1990).

Basso (1990) argues that, for a stranger to communicate appropriately with the members of an unfamiliar society, learning just to formulate messages

intelligibly is inadequate. He or she will need to have sufficient knowledge of what kinds of codes, channels, and expressions to use, in what kinds of situations and to what kinds of people, adding that for a stranger entering an alien society, a knowledge of when *not* to speak may be as important as what to say (Basso, 1990).

2.6.4 Communication Differences – High-Context Versus Low-Context Cultures

In high-context cultures such as China and Japan, meanings are largely internalised with significant emphasis on non-verbal codes. A lot is taken for granted and assumed to be shared, and coded in such a way that it is not necessary for the messages to be explicitly and verbally transmitted. In low-context cultures, however, messages are plainly and explicitly communicated and coded between people (Lustig & Koester, 1996). In high-context cultures, an important purpose in communicating is to ensure that harmony is promoted and sustained among the interactants (Lustig & Koester, 1996). Unconstrained reactions are frowned upon as they could threaten the 'face' or social esteem of others. In low-context cultures, however, an important purpose in communicating is to convey exact meaning and explicit messages help to achieve this goal.

During interaction, people from diverse cultural groups may hold previously established negative attitudes about one another (Javidi & Javidi, 1994). From their literature review, Javidi & Javidi (1994) came up with some pragmatic suggestions. First, communicators are encouraged to realise and appreciate each other's cultural diversities as valuable resources that need to be preserved and extended. Second, the communicators should attempt to replace their ethnocentric prejudicial attitudes with positive ones. Third, they should accept and be willing to interact with one another and to treat each other with respect. Fourth, communicators are strongly encouraged to strive to understand and appreciate each other's cultural similarities and dissimilarities, including each other's unique interpersonal communication

styles. Fifth, communicators should strive to adopt a flexible approach to adjust to the others' dissimilarities, so that they can predict and respond appropriately to the others' behaviour.

Additionally, interactions between persons from different cultures may be marked by a series of uncomfortable, asynchronous moments (Chick, 1990). Chick ascertained that because of differences in sociocultural background and conventions in their communicative approaches, people find it difficult to establish and maintain conversational cooperation, to the extent of perceiving the other person as "uncooperative, aggressive, callous, stupid, incompetent, or having some other undesirable personal traits" (p. 228). Over time and with repeated negative encounters, negative cultural stereotypes are formed (Chick, 1990).

Although intercultural communication is complex, covert, and context bound, it can be learned (Chick, 1986; Erickson, 1985; Gumperz & Roberts, 1980). There is a need to maintain awareness of the potential sources of asynchrony, and the possible negative consequences are seen as a prerequisite for such learning (Chick, 1986; Erickson, 1985; Gumperz & Roberts, 1980). Another important insight is that the responsibility for interactional miscommunication between people from different cultural backgrounds is to be borne by all participants, rather than unilaterally by one. This is a liberating insight, especially for those who wish to improve the quality of intercultural communication, enabling them to avoid unhelpful repair strategies that arise from blaming the other person (Erickson, 1985).

Given the significant complexities as depicted by various scholars noted above, it is not difficult to imagine that individuals from different cultures may perceive the opposite culture's communication approaches and styles as confusing, complex or even strange. However, if individuals from different cultural backgrounds are willing to suspend their natural prejudices and adopt an attitude of openness, flexibility, tolerance and attempt to understand each other's differences, then the barriers to communicating and understanding each other will be reduced, allowing for a more positive relationship-building,

better mutual understanding and lessening of interpersonal and intercultural conflicts.

Communication between people from different ethnic backgrounds frequently results in misunderstanding and conflict (Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1990). This miscommunication is a source of frustration to the participants in the communication and, as the miscommunication increases, racial and ethnic stereotyping begin to develop and impede further communication (Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1990). Stereotypes are stumbling blocks in communication and can be difficult to overcome even in the face of evidence. Stereotypes persist because they are firmly established as myths or truisms by one's own national culture and because they sometimes rationalise prejudices held (Pedersen & Pedersen, 1994). However, stereotyping may be a natural cognitive response for people, as they attempt to process, codify, interpret their thoughts and impressions in order to make sense of the different behavioural traits of individuals, be they in the form of ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation.

2.7 Interpersonal Conflict and Its Causes

Communication between people from different ethnic backgrounds is often a challenge and frequently ends up in conflict as a result of confusion and misunderstanding (Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1990). Conflict is most often defined as a struggle between parties who are linked in an interdependent manner over incompatible goals, interests or resources and is normally viewed in a negative light (Broome, 1990). Further, Ting-Toomey (1994a) contends that conflict is inevitable in all social and personal relationships. In root words in Latin for conflict, "com" and "fligere", means "together" and "to strike" or "to strike together". Where there is conflict, it exists in a state of dissonance or collision between two forces, with the dissonance expressed either overtly or covertly. Within the context of intercultural exchanges, conflict is defined as the perceived and/or actual incompatibility of values, expectations, processes, practices or outcomes between two or more parties

from different cultures. Typically, intercultural conflict begins with miscommunication, which in turn leads to misinterpretations and subsequently imagined conflict. However, if the miscommunication is unclarified or unresolved, it can become actual interpersonal conflict (Ting-Toomey, 1994a).

Various definitions of interpersonal conflict have been postulated, including:

... content-oriented differences of opinion that occur in interdependent relationships and can develop into incompatible goals and interests (Putnam & Wilson, 1982, p. 633);

... an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards, and interference from the other party in achieving their goals (Hocker & Wilmot, 1985, p. 23);

... the process that begins when one party perceives that another has frustrated, or is about to frustrate, some concern of his (Thomas, 1992a, p. 265);

... a process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party (Wall & Callister, 1995, p. 517).

Furthering the definitions given above, past research has viewed interpersonal conflict as a dynamic process which occurs between individuals and/or groups who are engaged in interdependent relationships, a phenomenon that is more likely to occur when a variety of background, situational factors and personal conditions exist (Barki & Hartwick, 2001, 2004). Barki & Hartwick (2004) extend the concept of conflict, referring to different contexts or forms of conflict – racial, ethnic, religious, political, marital, personality, gender, role, value, etc., as well as to different situational contexts where it occurs, including at home, in organisations, and on the battlefield.

In an attempt to consolidate the many variations of conflict definitions, Putnam & Poole (1987) and Thomas (1992a) conceptualised them into three

general themes/properties: (1) interdependence, (2) disagreement, and (3) interference. As identified by these authors, interdependence exists when one party's attainment of goals is affected by and dependent on the actions of the other party; disagreement is present when the affected parties each think there are differing opinions, goals or objectives, values, needs, and interests; and interference is when one or more of the parties interferes with, obstructs or opposes the other party's attainment of its interests, goals and objectives (Barki & Hartwick, 2001). The authors point out that although interdependence within an interpersonal context is a pre-condition of any conflict situation, this alone is insufficient, as not all interdependent parties will experience conflict.

Similarly, even where there is disagreement between parties, it does not necessarily mean that all of them will experience conflict because some may feel the differences are insignificant or minor. In essence, the core process of interpersonal conflict is the behaviour where one party opposes the other's interests, goals and objectives (Barki & Hartwick; Wall & Callister, 1995).

In the conceptualising of conflict, Barki & Hartwick (2001) discussed the presence of a fourth property which has also been identified by other researchers, that of negative emotions. Where there are major disagreements between disputing parties or when one party's important goals are not realised due to interference by the other party, negative emotions arise from the conflict situations. These emotions include jealousy, anger, stress and anxiety, or frustration (Amason, 1996; Jehn 1995; Pinkley, 1990; Pondy, 1967; Thomas, 1992a, 1992b, cited in Barki & Hartwick, 2001). With the identification of this fourth property, Barki & Hartwick (2001) defined interpersonal conflict as "a phenomenon that occurs between interdependent parties as they experience negative emotional reactions to perceived disagreements and interference with the attainment of their goals" (p. 198). The authors argue that a good assessment of interpersonal conflict should come from the evaluation of all four properties.

Differences in personal values between people from different cultural backgrounds have a strong effect (Wall & Callister (1995). A number of scholars claim that individuals in various societies value conflict very differently. For example, Western cultures believe conflict is inevitable and may even be advantageous while on the other hand, East Asian cultures feel that conflict is no good and therefore should be avoided (Lebra, 1976).

According to Wall & Callister (1995), there are several aspects of goals that will initiate conflict amongst people. If a person has a goal of engaging others in competition and conflict, then this is sure to generate conflict (Wong, Tjosvold & Lee, 1992). Another is when goals and aspirations are high because of a person's standing, past achievements and perceived power and the like, a person is more likely to come into conflict with another (Pruitt & Rubin, 1986). Also, even moderate but rigid goals such as avoiding humiliation can generate conflict (Kaplowitz, 1990). Further, if there is some sort of interdependence between one person and another, the person's goal achievement will normally generate conflict because the goal achievement is at the cost of the other's outcomes (Wall & Callister, 1995). These authors assert that stress and anger are also sources of conflict. As Derr (1978) notes, anger and stress generate a tenseness in a person which can churn itself up into confrontation and conflict with others.

Sheppard (1992) states that elements in the environment may contribute or even generate the conflict. For example, two parties with unequal power might be co-existing quite harmoniously in separate departments (organisational environment) but find themselves in a conflict situation when the organisation changes its structure and forces them to interact in a dependent situation (Brown, 1983). Some scholars found other elements in an organisational environment such as differences in power (Blalock, 1989), status (Walton & Dutton, 1969) and interdependence (Thompson, 1967).

2.7.1 Conflict Management

A substantive number of cross-culture studies in the last two decades from the early 1980s (Chinese Culture Connection, 1987; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Hofstede, 1980, 1991; Hui & Triandis, 1986; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990; Triandis, Brislin, & Hui, 1988; Wheeler, Reis, & Bond, 1989) presented theoretical and empirical evidence that the value orientations of individualism and collectivism are pervasive in differing cultures. Studies by Ting-Toomey and associates (Ting-Toomey, 1988, 1991; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991; Trubisky, Ting-Toomey, & Lin, 1991) related individualism-collectivism to conflict styles, providing clear research evidence that the role of cultural variability is significant in influencing cross-cultural conflict negotiation process. Cultural variability refers to how cultures vary on a continuum of variations based on some fundamental dimensions or core value characteristics. A significant dimension, which is the subject of countless studies over the years, is individualism-collectivism (Ting-Toomey, 1994a).

Individualism is a social pattern that refers to individuals, known as individualists, who view themselves as independent of collectives (Triandis, 1995). Individualism refers to the broad values of a culture tending to emphasise the importance of individual identity, rights, needs and goals – the “I” identity (Ting-Toomey, 1994a, b; Triandis, 1995). Conversely, collectivism refers to the broad value tendencies of a culture which emphasises the importance of group obligations, ingroup-oriented needs and desires – the “we” identity (Ting-Toomey, 1994a, b). According to Triandis (1995), collectivism is also a social pattern that refers to individuals as collectivists, who see themselves as part of one or more collectives (family, co-workers, tribe, nation). Unlike the individualists, collectivists tend to be more willing to give priority to the goals of these collectives over their own personal goals (Triandis, 1995). An ingroup is a group whose values, norms, and rules are significant to the effective functioning of the group in the society and these norms provide the guiding criteria for everyday behaviours for the members. In contrast, an outgroup is a group whose values, norms, and rules differ

from and are viewed as inconsistent with those of the ingroup (Ting-Toomey, 1994a, b).

High individualistic values have been found in the United States, Australia, Great Britain, Canada, the Netherlands, and New Zealand (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Hofstede, 1991). In his study, Hofstede (1991) identified high collectivistic values in Indonesia, China, Hong Kong, Colombia, Venezuela, Panama, Ecuador, and Guatemala. According to Hofstede, Japan as moderately collectivistic, and Germany as moderately individualistic.

In their intercultural communication research, Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) consistently identified Australia, Canada and the United States as cultures high in individualistic value tendencies. The authors presented strong empirical evidence supporting China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan and Mexico as collectivistic, group-based cultures. However, as Ting-Toomey (1994a) pointed out, within each culture, different ethnic communities can also display distinctive individualistic and collectivistic value tendencies.

Studies show that members of individualistic cultures tend to use conflict strategies that are more dominating, substantive, outcome-oriented (that is, integrating). They are less prone to use avoiding conflict strategies than members of collectivistic cultures (Elsayed-Ekhouly & Buda, 1996; Gabrielidis, Stephan, Ybarra, Dos Santos Pearson & Villareal, 1997; Ohbuchi, Fukushima & Tedeschi, 1999; Ting-Toomey, Gao, Trubisky, Yang, Kim, Lin & Nishida, 1991). This is consistent with an earlier study by Stewart (1972), who state that people from horizontal, individualistic cultures tend to prefer to face people directly, to confront them intentionally and in an assertive manner, whereas those from vertical or collectivistic cultures prefer to avoid face to face confrontations and often make use of intermediaries as go-betweens so as to avoid any chance of losing face.

Brew & Cairns' (2004) study was aimed at examining conflict management preferences between people from an individualist culture and those from a

collectivist culture in an Australian setting. Quoting Hofstede's (1980) research, Brew & Cairns refer to East Asian societies as collectivist, whereas those from the West, including Australia, are associated with individualism. Individualist cultures are more focused on individual goals, needs and rights than on community concerns. They are more assertive in their approach to conflict, displaying more adversarial tendencies and less concern about reducing animosity. In contrast to that, those from collectivist cultures value group goals and concerns and are usually characterised by a tendency to avoid conflict.

Using a sample of 163 Anglo-Australians (81 males, 82 females) and 133 East Asian ethnic Chinese university (66 males, 67 females) who were either working full or part-time, Brew & Cairns (2004) tested their hypothesis in an Australian context, and found that Anglo-Australians were more likely to favour assertive conflict management strategies (conflict-approach) than Chinese, who were more likely to favour a non-confrontational strategy (conflict-avoid) compared to Anglos. Brew & Cairns assert that their findings are consistent with the general trends in previous empirical research with other individualist and collectivist cultures.

Another similar study by Leung & Lind (1986) compared the dispute resolution styles between people from individualistic and collectivist cultures. The subjects under study were Americans from the U.S.A. (Western society) and East Asian (Hongkong Chinese). The researchers found that people from individualistic culture (in this case, Americans) preferred the adversarial procedures, whereas the Chinese (collectivists) tended toward non-adversarial and harmonious procedures. Other researchers (Elsayed-Ekhouly & Buda, 1996; Rahim, 1992; Schneider & Barsoux, 2003) suggest that people from individualistic cultures are more likely to push for and advance their own ideas (forcing style) to arrive at a winner-loser situation. Contrast this with the Chinese (collectivist) cultural style which favours sharing, concern for others and mutual gain if at all possible (problem-solving or avoiding style). Additional evidence shows that Chinese subjects, as compared to American subjects, preferred mediation and bargaining because

these procedures are more likely to yield compromising and harmonious relationships even after the dispute is settled (Leung, 1987). This perspective has merit and is supported by Kozan (1997) who proposed that a harmony model is more than likely found in collectivist cultures while a confrontation model is typically found in individualistic cultures. Interestingly, one study observed that the avoiding style is reflective of a high concern for others rather than the opposite (Gabrielidis, et al., 1997) as it may be interpreted as the people putting a positive value in the maintenance of harmony and “face” for both self and the other party (Redding, Norman & Schlander, 1994; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991).

In order to understand the underlying causes for cultural differences in conflict handling styles, it is necessary to appreciate the fundamental value orientations that vary between cultures and how they impact directly on their conflict handling behaviour (Morris, Williams, Leung, Larrick, Mendoza, Bhatnagar, Li, Kondo, Luo & Hu, 1998). In this respect, national cultures are identified as critical contextual variables which condition individuals’ conflict resolution behaviour (Hofstede, 1989; Lin & Miller, 2003).

A number of researchers (Cohen, 1991; Leung, 1987, 1988; Ting-Toomey, 1985) assert that people from a collectivist culture tend to display a stronger preference for informal third-party conflict mediation procedure than individualists. For the Chinese culture, conflict is usually diffused through using third-party intermediaries. There is an important difference in the use of third-party mediation between the individualistic, Western cultures and the collectivistic, Asian cultures. In the Western cultures, conflict parties typically seek help with an impartial third-party mediator, for example, a professional mediator or family therapist, whereas in many Asian cultures, conflict parties typically seek the help of a respected person, usually older and hence deemed to be wiser, someone who is related to both parties. To someone from a individualistic culture, this violates his/her sense of fairness when an “insider” or ingroup person is sent in to monitor or arbitrate the conflict outcome situation.

In an intense conflict situation, many people from collectivist cultures believe that verbal messages may well exacerbate the problem but by not using verbal means to explain or clarify an issue, they are often viewed as 'inscrutable' (Ting-Toomey, 1994). Collectivists view silence as desirable, requiring immense self-discipline. On the other hand, silence can be viewed with suspicion, or an admission of guilt or incompetence in an individualistic culture. In addition, while open emotional expression during a stressful conflict situation signifies openness and caring in an individualistic culture, proper emotional composure and emotional self-restraint are viewed as signals of a mature, self-disciplined person in most collectivistic, Asian cultures. In the conflict-management process of individualistic cultures, people typically employ verbal offence and defence to justify their position, clarify opinions and views, build up their individual credibility, express emotions, and raise objections or disagreements. Compare these with collectivistic conflict situations, in which ambiguous, indirect verbal messages are typically used with the purpose of saving mutual face, saving group face, or protecting someone else's face. Additionally, subtle non-verbal gestures or silence are often used to signal a sense of cautionary restraint toward the conflict situation. Where a deep-level silence is present, it may be reflective of the person's resignation and acceptance of the fatalistic aspect of the conflict situation. The higher the person is in authority in a collectivistic culture, the more likely she or he will use silence as a deliberate, cautionary conflict strategy.

Past studies indicate that collectivists on the whole tend to use more obliging and avoiding conflict styles in task-oriented conflict situations (Chua & Gudykunst, 1987; Leung, 1988; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991; Trubisky, Ting-Toomey, & Lin, 1991). Ting-Toomey et al. (1991) suggest that the status of the conflict participants affects their conflict management style. A high-status person in a collectivist culture can challenge or rebut the opinion of a low-status person but it is not normal, nor proper, for a low-status person to directly confront or challenge the position or opinion of a person in a higher-status than him/her, especially in public. In short, the issue of face maintenance is ever present and thus the low-status person would need to

learn to “give face” or protect the face of the high-status person in critical stress-bearing times, such as when engaged in conflict situations.

2.7.2 Face Theory

To the Chinese, face-saving for others or for one-self is valued highly. Face is an important concept in the Chinese culture. As such, the researcher finds it relevant and instructive to include a multitude of scholars’ work on face theory so as to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the concept as it relates to the ethnic Chinese, especially in their interactions with people.

Face theory advanced by Brown & Levinson (1987) and Goffman (1967), links the use of language to the definition of social roles and relationships exchange. The exchange currency in any dispute between people is the disputants’ face, and language provides the medium for making exchanges between people. Language that conveys an intention for a positive relationship in turn produces positive feelings about the speaker and affirms face. It sends a positive signal to the recipient that the speaker values the recipient and so affirms the recipient’s social standing (Oetzel, Myers, Meares, & Lara, 2003; Taylor, 2002; Wilson, Aleman, & Leatham, 1998; Wilson & Putnam, 1990). According to Goffman (1967), when the recipient is accorded face, he or she interprets that to mean that the speaker respects the recipient and considers him or her to have high reputation, esteem, and standing in society. This social recognition affirms the recipient’s self-image and generates positive emotions. It has the effect of reducing social distance and fostering a positive relationship (Berger & Bradac, 1982; Drake & Moberg, 1986).

Managing face is an underlying subtext in most social interactions. When people perceive their face is under attack, they are more likely to respond in a defensive manner and adopt an uncooperative stance (Brett et al., 2007). What they defend is their social honour and self-image (Blumstein, 1973; Goffman, 1959; Prus, 1975) and consequently an attack on face is

tantamount to an attack on a person's identity. It repudiates reputation and impugns the character. The usual response to an unjustified threat is to challenge the speaker and engage him or her in a contest of supremacy (Deutsch, 1973). Goffman (1967) asserts that the need to maintain face is a prevalent cultural value and that people will go to great lengths to preserve face. What is more, attacks on face are likely to harden positions, escalate conflict, and reduce the likelihood of reaching an agreement or compromise (Deutsch & Krauss, 1962; Tjosvold, 1985; Tjosvold & Huston, 1978).

In contrast, when people feel that their face is preserved, they are more than likely to respond with positive behaviour, one that is both cooperative and helpful. Acts that attack a person's face include, but are not limited to, threats, warnings, orders, expressions of strong negative emotions such as anger and hatred, disapproval, insults, criticism, contempt, ridicule, and accusations (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

2.7.3 Face Concerns in Interpersonal Conflict

In the context of social interaction, "face" represents an individual's claimed sense of positive image. Conflict management style refers to a person's general patterned tendencies of responses to conflict in a variety of antagonistic interactive environments (Putnam & Poole, 1987; Sternberg & Dobson, 1987; Ting-Toomey, 1997).

Oetzel's (1998) study finds that the avoiding-conflict style is positively associated with interdependence which leads Oetzel to assume that this relationship is due to a strong concern for the other person's face. The face-negotiation theory argues that: (a) people in all cultures try to maintain and negotiate face in every communication situation; (b) the concept of face becomes problematic, especially in uncertainty situations such as embarrassment and conflict situations when the situated identities of the communicators are called into question; (c) cultural variability, individual-level and situational variables all influence cultural members' selection of one set

of face concerns over others, such as self-oriented face-saving vs. other-oriented face-saving; and (d) subsequently, face concerns have a bearing on the use of various facework and conflict strategies, be it in intergroup or interpersonal encounters (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003).

There are three elements in the face-negotiation theory, with each element taking on a specific emphasis on face concerns. *Self-face* is the concern for a person's own image, *other-face* is the concern for someone else's image, and *mutual-face* is concern for images and/or the "image" of the relationship of both parties (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). Members of individualistic cultures have a greater concern for self-face and lesser concern for other-face than members of collectivistic cultures (Cocroft & Ting-Toomey, 1994; Gao, 1998; Oetzel et al., 2001; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998).

Members of collectivistic cultures (Chinese, South Korean, and Taiwanese) reported a higher degree of "other-face" than members of the individualistic culture such as U.S. Americans; in contrast, U.S. Americans have a higher degree of self-face than the South Koreans. A later study found that Japanese tend to have low self-face and high other-face relative to other national cultures (Cocroft & Ting-Toomey, 1994; Oetzel et al., 2001). Self-constructs are related to face concerns. For instance, independence is associated positively with self-face, whereas interdependence is associated positively with other-face (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003).

In turn, face concerns influence conflict styles. Self-face is co-related positively with dominating conflict styles, whereas other-face is associated positively with avoiding conflict styles. In addition, integrating (substantive and relational conflict modes) are associated positively with both self- and other-face (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). The two subsequent studies largely support these propositions with the authors finding a positive relationship between self-face and dominating conflict styles and positive relationships between other-face and avoiding, obliging, integrating, and

compromising conflict styles (examples Ting-Toomey et al.'s (1991) study; Barki & Hartwick, 2001; and Oetzel, Myers, Meares, & Lara, 2003).

2.7.4 Facework

Facework is defined as clusters of communicative behaviours that are used to enact self-face and to uphold, challenge/threaten, or support the other person's face. It is a set of communicative behaviours that people use to regulate their social dignity and interpersonal relationships. Face and facework are about interpersonal self-worth and other-identity consideration issues (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). Face is fundamentally a "social self" construction. Social self is closely connected with the conceptualisation of "personal self" in different cultures. While face and facework are universal phenomenon, it is how we "frame" the situated meaning of face and how we enact facework that differs from one culture to another (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). The authors maintain that face has a direct influence on conflict behaviour. This is because in any conflict situation the conflict parties have to consider protecting self-interest conflict goals and honouring or attacking another person's conflict goals. In the case of intercultural conflict, this often involves miscommunication between members of two or more cultures over incompatible identity, relational, process, and substantive conflict issues (Ting-Toomey, 1994a, 1994b; Ting-Toomey, 1997; Wilmot & Hocker, 1998). Where there are different cultural values and conflict assumptions, the initial miscommunication between two cultural parties can easily progress into an intensive, polarised conflict situation (S. Ting-Toomey & A. Kurogi, 1998).

Facework also refers to specific verbal and non-verbal messages that help to maintain and restore face loss and to uphold and honour face gain (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). Face is associated with a host of virtues including respect, honour, loyalty and trust. It is also associated with status, reputation, credibility, competence, family/network connection, relational indebtedness and obligation issues. Giving face to a person means not humiliating or embarrassing him or her publicly. It means leaving the other person with

sufficient room to retrieve his or her social dignity even in an anxiety-laden, conflict experience (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998).

In terms of Chinese facework, it is conceptualised as a typical conflict-preventive mechanism and a primary means to cultivate and promote harmonious human relationships in Chinese social encounters (Cheng, 1986; Jia, 1997). Jia (1997) interprets face to be essential to healthy social interactions. Ting-Toomey (1988) posits that face-giving is a major component of the collectivist culture. The Chinese concept of face is typically hierarchical (Chang & Holt, 1994; Scollon & Scollon, 1994). Chang & Holt trace the origin of the Chinese concept of face to Confucian thought. The authors maintain that face (*mien-tze*) is exercised according to the relational hierarchy within the family, and the hierarchical nature of the society (p. 105). Scollon & Scollon (1994) express a similar stance, stating that the concept of hierarchy is deeply embedded in the Chinese concept of face. Hu (1944) suggests that the loss of face signifies the condemnation of the face-losing member by his or her community/society. The maintenance of face, the fear of losing face, and the concern for *mien-tze* are used to regulate interpersonal relationships within the society and help community members cultivate themselves to acquire the Confucian ethos (Chang & Holt, 1994; Jia, 1997). The principle of such a regulation is to follow the Confucian ideal of personhood and social harmony.

As the Chinese framework of face suggests, conflicts are neither healthy nor constructive and actively invoking conflicts is contrary to the fundamental Chinese notion of social harmony. Confucianism takes the view that conflicts amongst people in a society are morally and emotionally unacceptable and would be shameful and face-losing. In other words, a competent member of Chinese culture should be able to prevent, avoid, tolerate, and ignore conflicts in order to cultivate harmony through the application of these facework strategies everyday. Therefore, preventing conflicts and treating them as though they are not in existence through the use of facework strategies is encouraged in Chinese society (Jia, 1997).

The concept of “face” in the Chinese culture has its origins from Confucian times. Confucianism has survived throughout the centuries, even surviving the Cultural Revolution in the People’s Republic of China (also known as mainland China) while under Premier Mao’s communist dominance. Confucius teachings are still revered by many ethnic Chinese to this day. It appears to be alive and well amongst the descendants of the very early Chinese who left their motherland in search of a better life for themselves and their families all those thousands of years ago. In many ways, to understand Confucius teachings is to understand the Chinese, their values, traditions and social behaviour and relationships, as Confucius thought permeates across all echelons of the Chinese society. It is therefore instrumental for this study to include the works of the scholars who have made indepth studies of Confucianism. It is also pertinent to add another dimension to show how and whether Communism (the words Communism and Marxism are used interchangeably from here on) has altered the traditional beliefs and practices.

2.7.5 Confucianism and Social Relationship – Influence on Behaviour

The most significant characteristic in East Asia is the emphasis on social relationships which stems from the teachings from Confucianism. Confucianism continues to endure as the basic social and political value system for more than a 1,000 years. It was adopted as the official philosophy of the Yi dynasty for 500 years in Korea, of the Tokugawa shogunate in Japan for 250 years, and of many dynasties in China. It was deeply entrenched in the formal educational system and in the selection process of government officials until modern educational curricula were introduced.

Confucius was primarily concerned with maintaining an orderly society. His teachings were based on several principles. A central principle of Confucianism was respect for authority and tradition. In Confucian society, people’s duties and responsibilities were built on the five basic human social relationships which were ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife,

elder and younger brother, and friend and friend. Children were taught their duties and responsibilities from a very young age. A second principle centred on conformity. Exercising individuality was a threat to an orderly society and therefore directly contradictory to one's duties and responsibilities to others (Fouts & Chan, 1995).

Confucianism is a philosophy of human nature that considers structures for human relationships as the basis of a functioning society. It lays down four principles for the correct conduct for human beings: *jen* (humanism), *i* (faithfulness/loyalty), *li* (propriety/respect for social forms), and *chih* (wisdom or a liberal education). The cardinal principle, *jen* (humanism) fundamentally means warm human feelings between human beings (Yum, 1994).

A later study by Lustig & Koester (1996) offers a broader perspective on Confucianism. In their study, Lustig & Koester (1996) state that Confucianism (Chinese name *Kong Fu Ze*) is not a religion but a set of practical principles and ethical rules for daily life. Lustig & Koester posit that these ideas have long held a central place not only in China but also in Japan, Korea, and elsewhere in Asia. According to Lustig & Koester (1996), the key principles of Confucian teaching include the following:

Social order and stability between people are based on hierarchy; for example, parent-child, elder brother-younger sibling, teacher-student, manager-subordinate. The higher-status person in each pair must provide protection and consideration, while the lower-status person owes respect and obedience.

The *family is the prototype* for all social relationships. The roles regulating family relationships are extended to include the village, town, organisation and the wider community. Children are taught to behave with restraint, to overcome their individuality, and to maintain group harmony. Harmony is highly valued and is sustained through the maintenance of "face," or people's sense of dignity, self-respect, and prestige. Confucius taught that social relations should be conducted so that no one loses face. For this reason,

intermediaries are used to initiate social contacts and avoid any potential conflict. Further, to preserve face, formality and indirect language are typically used to maintain a heightened sense of politeness and avoid embarrassing confrontations.

Proper social behaviour. Confucius related this to shared expectations about social obligations and responsibilities. Confucius taught that a person must first learn to be sensitive to, and sympathetic of, others' feelings before she or he can expect to achieve harmonious relationships. Accordingly, a person should first examine her- or himself when problems in communication and interpersonal relationships occur.

People should be skilled, educated, hard-working, thrifty, modest, patient, and persevering. Confucius placed high value on teaching and learning and moderation in all things. Greed is frowned on, losing one's temper is unacceptable, and persistence such as in solving difficult problems is widely valued. Such practices are aimed at the larger goal of promoting a world at peace.

A review of literature on Confucianism by scholars including Yum (1994) and Lustig & Koester (1996) offers substantial evidence that the Chinese culture has commonly been influenced by Confucian values for centuries. Confucianism provided an ideological framework that instructed and guided how the society is to be organised, as well as how people should live a good and moral life. In essence, Confucianism defined what it meant to be Chinese and defined Chinese culture. It has survived over the centuries, absorbing both physical and intellectual invasions (Fouts & Chan, 1995).

In accordance with Confucian tradition, Chinese families generally respect and value education highly, viewing it as a gateway to personal and, by its extension, family success. They view academic excellence as a way out from low-skill, menial, and labour-intensive work for which early migrants were largely recruited (Ip, 1996). Ip states that education offers more than academic credentials; it also opens up new opportunities to young Chinese

and challenges them to think beyond their inherited values and traditional concepts. Traditionally, Chinese values cherish collective welfare above individual interest (Ip, 1996).

The educational system became the conserving force in Confucian society (Fouts & Chan, 1995). In Bastid's (1987) study, the author observed that the Chinese have always been aware of the importance of education and its influence in shaping the social order and, therefore, its control by the state was vital. The Confucian model of education was designed to train the leaders of China who were traditionally men, and who were to be the embodiment of Confucian morals and values (Thomas, 1983).

Under Chairman Mao's Communist regime, a series of educational reforms were implemented from 1958 to 1966. Interestingly, the advent of the Communist regime did not lessen the demands of the Chinese society for the Confucian-based moral education and its importance to society, but the Communists introduced additional new virtues and values into schools (Fouts & Chan, 1995). Some examples of the new virtues and values introduced include loving the motherland (mainland China), and the Chinese Communist Party. Also valued and deemed virtuous are courtesy, honesty, modesty, discipline, courage, hardworking and plain living (Price, 1991). Young Chinese children are taught these values and virtues right from the beginning of their formal education. It is instructive to note that, among the virtues and values in the moral education curriculum, individuality, critical thinking, human rights, personal freedom, independence and other concepts central to the western way of life are conspicuously missing. However, the Communist regime of the past 40 years cannot be blamed because these missing values are not part of Chinese history or Confucian culture to start with (Fouts & Chan, 1995).

Mao believed that Confucian education, which centred on its elitist nature where only the land-owning social class dominated the system and which promoted the separation from the world of work, was counter-revolutionary and bourgeois. Thus, Mao introduced radical educational reforms which

peaked during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) during which time many schools and universities closed for years on end, resulting in what was described as the 'lost generation' of youths and young adults. In essence, Mao tried to change traditional practices through a fanaticism that nearly destroyed the fabric of Chinese education and its inherent Chinese culture. However, 2000 years of Confucian principles and values cannot be destroyed that easily. In the period following the Cultural Revolution, changes reverting to Confucian values took hold and elements of Communist ideology became superimposed onto the Confucian model. Teaching and learning largely remained didactic and rote, with Communist morality and the writings of Mao replacing Confucius. While the characteristics of the Chinese educational system reflected the traits of Confucian education and Confucian values, universal rather than elitist education became the goal, and a larger number of vocational schools were created to bring a practical element to learning (Fouts & Chan, 1995).

Despite the radical reforms introduced during the Mao years, in many ways Chinese education has retained many Confucian ideals. Most Chinese have great respect for the highly educated, perceiving education as the key to social status and advancement. The education system still has a strong elitist element through the examination process (where only a limited number are allowed to pass) and strict entrance procedures to certain key schools and universities. Nonetheless, Communism influence is definitely felt. The focus on duty and responsibility to authority now has a Marxist flavour, with Confucian ideals of society simply replaced by Mao's teachings (Fouts & Chan, 1995).

In the late 20th Century, the Chinese in mainland China recognised the need to modernise their society, while at the same time preserve many of its traditional Chinese values and customs. During the 1980s, education was promoted as the means to modernisation. When the drive for modernisation began, under Communist rule many Chinese believed that they were being held back by Confucian ideals. For others, the teachings of Marx and Mao became the alternative, but they too soon came to a realisation that this was

not an inadequate base. As a consequence, education for the youth of China became a conglomeration of Confucian values, Marxist ideology, and a modernising pragmatism that leaves many in disarray (Ross, 1991). The traditional Confucian values of respect, order and conformity are juxtaposed with Communist ideals (Fouts & Chan, 1995).

In today's China, pragmatism has triumphed over other ideologies. With the death of Chairman Mao in 1976, China's new Communist government quickly redefined socialism, and began a series of economic reforms (Zhao, 1997). The youth in present day China are living in a period of massive change. In the advent of the economic reforms, forces of modernisation and opening up to the outside world, Chinese youth are being exposed to ideas and values that are very different to the traditional Chinese values upheld by their parents and grandparents, as well as to the Communist ideals. They are living in a society that is an amalgam of the old, the radical and the new.

The Chinese continue to place great importance on education and many values of the Confucian teachings are actively directing the educational system. The respect for authority, conformity and order are important elements of this tradition. On the other hand, the Communist influence is still strong, with Communist morality having supplanted some of the elements of Confucian ideals. The elitist nature (Confucian) of education is being replaced by compulsory universal (Communist) education which emphasises technical and vocational learning and work (Fouts & Chan, 1995). However, there is some evidence that the blind acceptance of the Communist Party's teaching is waning (Fouts & Chan, 1995) as, according to Rosen (1985; 1991), there is evidence of widespread scepticism about the formal moral and political education in the schools.

In summary, Confucian society demanded conformity, respecting authority and imposed responsibility on the various relationships as defined by traditional Chinese society. These responsibilities defined what was moral and appropriate behaviour. Educating and socialising a child was the responsibility of the society which, in essence, means the families and

schools. However, Chinese culture in mainland China has been influenced by Mao and his teachings for four decades (Fouts & Chan, 1995). Although modernisation and efforts by Mao and succeeding Communist governments have tempered to some degree elements of Confucian society, Confucian thought still provides a powerful ethos within modern Communist China. Social responsibility, respect for authority, conformity and societal cohesion are taught and fostered, albeit within a Communist framework (Fouts & Chan, 1995).

The Confucian legacy of consideration for one another and concern for proper conduct of human relationships has led to the development of communication patterns that preserve one another's face. Brown & Levinson (1978) referred to the politeness phenomena in language (indirectness is one of them) to the notion of "face". The concern for another's face is achieved via indirect communication which helps to avoid any embarrassment of rejection by the other person or disagreement among partners, thereby leaving the relationship and each other's face intact. Lebra (1976) listed a number of ways in which a person can preserve one's face through indirect communication: mediated communication by asking someone else to transmit the message, refracted communication, that is talking to a third person in the presence of the intended person, and acting as a delegate which really is conveying one's message as being from someone else.

Overall, Confucianism places emphasis on social relationships – cooperation with each other, warm relaxed human relations, consideration of others, and group harmony. However, there are drawbacks, as under such social constraints, individual initiative and innovation are restrained with some individuals feeling that their individuality is being suffocated. Substantial changes have occurred in the East Asian societies since World War II where there has been an irrepressible influx of Western values; imported films and television programmes are ubiquitous. Nevertheless, it is difficult to change several hundred years of Confucian legacy, even though it seems inevitable that the East Asian countries will see an increasing number of people who do

not have traditional, binding relationships as the society moves further toward industrialisation and higher mobility (Yum, 1994).

Human relationships under Confucianism are not universalistic but particularistic. Instead of applying the same rule to everybody with whom they interact, East Asians grade and regulate relationships differently according to the level of intimacy, the status of the persons, and the particular context. To people from individualistic cultures and values, applying different rules to different people and situations may seem unfair and inequitable (Yum, 1994).

Confucius teachings continue to endure through the generations, guiding and impacting on ethnic Chinese people's social interactions. Confucianism is so entrenched in the ethnic Chinese's psyche that its principles are practiced without anyone questioning or challenging them, not unlike automatic responses. Hence, with this knowledge of the depth of the Confucian influence on ethnic Chinese people, this study hopes to provide the people of New Zealand some insights into understanding the thoughts, behaviour and practices of the ethnic minority migrant Chinese as they grapple with the acculturation process in their adopted country. Given the complexities inherent in the social interactions between people of different cultures, it can be inferred that interpersonal conflict is unavoidable. For New Zealand, it being a migrant-receiving country (Pio, 2005a) with its workplaces becoming more and more diverse thereby putting organisations under pressure to change and accommodate the diverse ethnicity of the workforce (Pringle & Scowcroft, 1996), it is instructive and of relevance to review literature on conflict management from an organisational context.

2.7.6 Conflict Management from an Organisational Context

Conflict is prevalent in organisations and that several factors contribute to it. As predicted, workforces are becoming increasingly diverse, which set the stage for conflict (Donnellon & Kolb, 1994) arising from differing goals,

perceptions, values, commitments, etc. of demographically and culturally diverse identity groups. The authors maintain that conflict operates as a cycle: causes initiate the core conflict and its effects; these effects then feed back to re-ignite the process, and in turn it may escalate or it may not.

Organisations, especially larger ones, may have established procedures and practices to guide its members on conflict prevention, handling and its management. Organisational incentive structures, rules, procedures, and power structures are organisational-level factors that often reduce conflicts at interpersonal and intergroup levels (Morrill, 1991; Thomas, 1988).

Goals, interpretations, experiences, culture, plus a number of other factors influence the disputants' conflict-management approaches. People who are from a culture that has an emphasis on harmony are expected to take non-confrontational actions before addressing the conflict directly (Wall & Callister, 1995).

2.7.7 Effective Conflict Management

For conflict to be managed effectively, it requires the parties to communicate effectively and creatively, and in accordance with the different conflict interactive situations. It also requires them to be knowledgeable and sensitive to and respectful of different worldviews and ways of dealing with a conflict situation (Ting-Toomey, 1994a). People from both collectivistic and individualistic cultures have much to learn from each other's basic conflict management styles. As Ting-Toomey (1994a) suggests, in conflict situations with people from a collectivist culture, individualists need to learn to respect the collectivistic ways of approaching and handling conflicts by being: (1) mindful of the face-maintenance assumptions of conflict situations; (2) proactive in dealing with low-grade conflict situations and preventing it from escalating into mutual face-loss scenario by using informal consultation or the "go between" method; (3) "give face" to the other party by letting them find their way out of a conflict situation gracefully and, by doing so,

individualists may enhance their own face; (4) understanding and sensitive to the importance of quiet, mindful observation and other non-verbal process of the collectivists by refraining from asking too many “why” questions; (5) patient and attentive in their listening; (6) less abrupt or blunt, refraining from saying “no” straight up as this is typically a face-losing threat; (vii) aware that avoidance is part of the integral, conflict style that is commonly used in the collectivistic cultures. Avoidance does not necessarily mean that collectivists do not care to resolve the conflict. The avoidance strategy is primarily used to avoid face-threatening interactions and is used preserve face harmony and mutual face dignity.

In turn, here are some suggestions put forth by Ting-Toomey (1994a) when encountering a conflict situation in an individualistic culture, collectivists need to: (1) separate the relationship from the conflict problem and learn to compartmentalise the task dimension and the socio-emotional dimension of conflict; (2) focus on resolving the substantive issues of the conflict and learn to express opinions or viewpoints openly; (3) refrain from taking the conflict issues personally by distancing the person and from the conflict problem; (4) learn to speak up and engage in an assertive, levelling style of conflict behaviour and in this way accord each party their individual right to defend his or her position; (5) take individual responsibility for the conflict decision-making process; (6) learn to understand that they need to explain a situation more fully rather than expect others to infer their points of view; (7) engage in active listening and provide verbal responses; and (8) use direct, integrative verbal messages that convey their concerns clearly. Some scholars call it relationship conflict. Relationship conflict is defined as the perception of interpersonal incompatibility, and it is often characterised by animosity, tension, and annoyance among members (Simons & Peterson, 2000).

2.7.8 Effects of Conflict – Negative and Positive

According to Wall & Callister (1995, p. 544), conflict is a “process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively

affected by another party (or parties)”, and in this process there are causes, a core interaction, and effects.

A substantial amount of conflict literature looked at the positive and negative outcomes of interpersonal conflict. Negative outcomes include distrust of others, hostility, decreased group coordination and cohesiveness, reduced job satisfaction and motivation, higher absenteeism and turnover, grievances, and lower performance and productivity (Pruitt & Rubin, 1986; Putnam & Poole, 1987; Thomas, 1976; 1992; Wall & Callister, 1995).

The effects of conflict can be classified variously including: individuals, interpersonal relationships or communications, behaviours, issues, and residues of the conflict (Wall & Callister, 1995). These are discussed below.

Conflict has long been known to have the potential to harm group processes, such as coordination and cooperation, as well as performance outcomes such as goal accomplishment (Langfred, 2007). The overall effect of relationship conflict on performance appears to be negative (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Ilgen, Hollenbeck, Johnson, & Jundt, 2005).

Interpersonal conflict can negatively affect trust between the people involved, reducing or even eroding it (Langfred, 2007; Porter & Lilly, 1996). In cases of unresolved conflict, people may harbour a desire to “get even” or seek retribution (Langfred, 2007). Conflict can result in employee behaviours that harm an organisation or its members (Spector, 2005). In some instances, individuals simply reduce or minimise their interactions with the other parties in order to avoid conflicts (DeLeon, 2001; Langfred, 2007).

Simons & Peterson (2000) found that relationship conflict led to avoidance, reduced interaction, and alienation of members, resulting in behavioural disintegration. The effects on individuals include upset parties (Bergman & Volkema, 1989), feelings such as anger, hostility and tension (Thomas, 1976), anxiety (Ephross & Vassil, 1993), social-emotional separation (Retzinger, 1991). Interestingly, when the level of conflict is of low intensity,

parties engaged in the conflict may find it stimulating or exhilarating (Filley, 1978; Thomas, 1976). However, personal frustrations are often the consequence of experiencing negative emotions (Chesler, Crowfoot, & Bryant, 1978; Thomas, 1976), low job satisfaction (Derr, 1978; Filley, 1978; Robbins, 1978), reduced motivation and performance (Bergman & Volkema, 1989).

The effects of conflict have far reaching consequences that often damage interpersonal relationships. During and after conflict, conflicting parties' perception of each other include mutual distrust (Deutsch, 1973, 1990, 1993; Pruitt, Rubin, & Kim, 1994; Thomas, 1976), believing that the behaviour of the other party is harmful (Blake & Mouton, 1984) especially when one party perceives that the other is blocking its goals (Wall & Callister, 1995). Furthermore, attitudes toward one another usually become more negative (Bergman & Volkema, 1989).

In terms of communication, conflict also produces negative effects, impacting on both the quality and quantity of communication (Barki & Hartwick, 2004; Wall & Callister, 1995). Communication may increase or decrease (Bergman & Volkema, 1989; Sternberg & Dobson, 1987; van de Vliert, 1990) or decrease (Pruitt & Rubin, 1986; Thomas, 1976). Quality-wise, the communication tends towards hostility, with one or both parties trading insults with each other, or deteriorate to misunderstandings and distortions (Wall & Callister, 1995). On the other hand, parties engaged in conflict may use the communication channels to air issues (Robbins, 1974) or to close up and avoid the opposing party (Bergman & Volkema, 1989). An ancillary effect of conflict is an increase in communications with other people who have no direct involvement in the conflict as the disputants discuss the situation with co-workers or outsiders (Bergman & Volkema, 1989). On the other hand, communications with other people not directly involved in the conflict may decrease as external parties – co-workers and outsiders – avoid getting into any conversation or dialogue with the parties in conflict.

Furthermore, conflict may affect the behaviour of the parties in conflict. The behavioural patterns of parties engaged in conflict may range from confrontations (Morrill & Thomas, 1992), face-saving tactics and defensive responses (Ting-Toomey et al., 1991) passive and avoiding behaviour (Bergman & Volkema, 1989; Sternberg & Dobson, 1987; van de Vliert, 1990), hostile acts, threats and physical force (Sternberg & Dobson, 1987; Sternberg & Soriano, 1984; van de Vliert, 1990), and coercion (Schelling, 1960). Longer term, conflict may increase absenteeism and grievances and reduced productivity (Lewin, 1987; Pondy, 1967; Robbins, 1978; Tjosvold, 1991), as well as decreased commitments to decision implementations (Derr, 1978; Filley, 1978).

In a conflict situation, simple issues can easily escalate and become more complex from the distortions, misunderstandings and misconceptions arising from it, clouding the objectivity of each party and consequently making it increasingly difficult to solve the dispute(s) (Wall & Callister, 1995). Negative fallouts may also result with external parties who are unwittingly caught up in the dispute and can be as minor as simply having to listen to the disputants' complaints.

As pointed out by Wall & Callister (1995), whatever the effects of conflict, numerous scholarly studies such as those presented above highlight the many downsides of conflict, that not only does conflict have significant negative effects, it also has a propensity to escalate.

Notwithstanding the many downsides of conflict, it would be remiss not to acknowledge that there are positive effects too. At low to moderate levels, conflict can improve group efficiency and productivity (Chesler et al., 1978; Derr, 1978), stimulate creativity and improve the quality of decisions (Cosier & Dalton, 1990), and challenge the status-quo (Wall & Callister, 1995). Tjosvold (1991) and Touval (1992) add personal development and better self-awareness and learning to the list. Conflict yields benefits for a person motivating him or her to perpetuate the process. On the other hand, the

losing party will also perpetuate the conflict, fighting to even the score (Wall & Callister, 1995).

There are other examples of positive outcomes from conflict. They include greater self-awareness, creativity, adaptation, and learning (Cosier & Dalton, 1990; Robbins, 1978; Tjosvold, 1991). Positive outcomes from conflict situations arise from the use of appropriate conflict management styles, while negative outcomes result from inappropriate styles (Barki & Hartwick, 1991). This view by Barki & Hartwick is consistent with the normative conflict literature which state that the style of conflict management determines whether conflict has positive or negative effects (Deutsch, 1990; Pondy, 1967).

Barki & Hartwick (1991) found that normative literature suggests that interpersonal conflict is neither good nor bad per se. Barki & Harwick concluded from their study that interpersonal conflict is not only a negative experience, but that it also negatively affects the outcomes, even when it is well managed. From these findings, the authors thus raised questions concerning some research literature which posit that some conflict can be stimulating (Filley, 1978) and that, when managed well, conflict can be beneficial (Deutsch, 1990; Pondy, 1967). This points to the importance of preventing or minimising interpersonal conflict and as Wall & Callister (1995) noted, "The effects expected from moderate conflict – namely creativity, problem awareness, adaptation and self-awareness – can be better achieved through other means. More importantly, the downside risks of creating conflict are substantial; not only does conflict have significant negative effects, it also has a pernicious tendency to escalate" (p. 526).

2.7.9 Conflict Handling Styles: Individual and Cultural Differences

A substantial amount of research has been devoted to studying and discussing the different types of conflict handling and its management (examples, Black & Mendenhall, 1993; Fey & Beamish, 1999, Koot, 1988, Lin

& Wang, 2002). This is in addition to the numerous studies on interpersonal conflict, management and resolutions including studies on conflict management styles and their role in achieving positive or negative outcomes (Blake & Mouton, 1984; Pruitt and Rubin, 1986; Putnam & Poole, 1987; Thomas, 1976, 1992b; Wall & Callister, 1995). Traditionally, researchers have identified five different styles of behavioural tendencies when experiencing and managing conflicts. The five styles of personal conflict management as summarised by various (see Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993; Rahim, 1983; Wall & Callister, 1995; Wang, Lin, Chan, & Shi, 2005). They are: (1) forcing or competing (assertive, uncooperative, low concern for others and high concern for self); (2) avoiding (unassertive, uncooperative, low concern for self and for others), (3) compromising (moderately assertive, moderately cooperative, moderate concern for self and for others), (4) problem solving or collaboration (assertive, cooperative, high concern for self and for others), and (5) accommodating or obliging (unassertive, cooperative, low concern for self and high concern for others). According to Barki & Hartwick (2001), those individuals who are more inclined to the *accommodating* style usually feel that the other parties' or group needs are more important than their own and therefore have the tendency to adopt this style with the aim of smoothing over conflicts. Cooperating, yielding and sacrificing are other terms for this second style.

In Wall & Callister's (1995) study, there is some evidence indicating that males are more apt to use forcing as a conflict resolution approach while females tend to rely on the other styles. In a superior-subordinate conflict, superiors tend toward forcing (Howat & London, 1980; Morley & Shockley-Zalabak, 1986; Phillips & Cheston, 1978; Putnam & Wilson, 1982; Wall & Callister, 1995) whereas subordinates prefer avoiding (London & Howat, 1978; Wall & Callister, 1995), compromising (Renwick, 1975; Wall & Callister, 1995) or smoothing (Putnam & Wilson, 1982; Wall & Callister, 1995).

A number of scholars have linked different cultures to preferred forms of handling conflict (Chua & Gudykunst, 1987; Elsayed-Ekhouly & Buda, 1996; Leung, 1987; Morris et al., 1998, Ting-Toomey et al, 1991; Trubisky, Ting-

Toomey, & Lin, 1991; Chen, Ryan, & Chen, 2000; He, Zhu, & Peng, 2002). While there are various studies that support that the right amount of conflict is healthy in organisations (Robbins, 1974), there are studies that find empirical evidence in East Asian cultures which suggests conflict has negative effects on the balance of feelings within the work unit (Swierczek, 1994). More tellingly, even efforts by either party (engaged in a conflict) to resolve conflicts may become the most serious sources of conflict in itself. This is because each side may attempt to resolve the conflict by using methods which have typically been successful in their own culture (Black & Mendenhal, 1993). Therefore, it is important to understand how different cultures view conflict and how they approach its resolution. This is consistent with Ting-Toomey & Oetzel (2001) who state that cultural socialisation establishes the foundation for individual orientations (i.e. self-constructs) and conflict behaviour. The authors went on to say that cultural orientations influence the degree of people's self-constructs; these self-perceptions then influence the level of face concerns that individuals have in a conflict situation. Finally, these 'face' concerns then impact the conflict behaviour. Therefore, culture has a direct effect and a mediated effect on conflict behaviour.

Significantly, individuals and cultures have a predominant conflict style; however, it is possible to alter conflict styles in different situations (Cupach & Canary, 1997; Wilmot & Hocker, 2001). Conflict style is a combination of traits such as cultural background and personality, and situation (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003). A two-dimensional framework provided two basic distinctions in people's conflict resolution styles and are determined by their concern for their own outcomes (assertiveness), and for the outcomes of others (cooperativeness) (Blake, Shepard & Mouton, 1964, Pruitt, Carnavale, 1993, Rahim, 1983; Thomas & Kilmann, 1974).

Also significant is the level of interpersonal conflict, according to Barki & Hartwick (2001), who assert that the level may determine which conflict management style the individual will choose; for instance, high levels of conflict may cause individuals to be hesitant to use the problem-solving style

because this style normally involves open and candid exchanges of information by the relevant parties. Barki & Hartwick (2001) surmise that intensive conflicts may induce individuals to adopt an avoiding style as a means of getting away from the situation, or an asserting style to satisfy one's own concerns or signify one's superiority and strength over the other party. This implies that the higher the level of conflict, the higher the level of asserting and avoiding styles is adopted and in turn, lower levels of problem-solving.

In relation to the five styles of Putnam & Wilson (1982) discussed earlier (avoiding, accommodating or obliging, problem-solving or collaboration, competing or forcing, and compromising) (Ting-Toomey et al., 1991; Barki & Hartwick, 2001; Oetzel, Myers, Meares, & Lara, 2003; Wang, Lin, Chan & Shi, 2005), the harmony model's focus is on cooperative behaviour in handling differences (Kozan, 1997). In the harmony model, various non-confrontational means – including avoiding and compromising – are used to manage the conflict so as to maintain group harmony. In Western cultures, avoiding is viewed derogatively as it sidesteps the issue (Kozan, 1997). Chinese people tend to traditionally resolve disputes through negotiations as this offers the advantage of neither party losing face (Zirin, 1997). China is known as a collectivist culture that values relationships that stress harmony, cooperation, face-saving and the procedure that nurtures them (Leung, 1987).

Still within the harmony model, compromising refers to the conflict resolution strategy that seeks a middle ground (Froman & Cohen, 1970), and for mutual benefit, enabling each party to be better off than if no agreement is reached as well as to avoid a win-lose situation (Swierczek, 1994). As a conflict resolution style, compromising is preferred by the. Their preference for this style has a direct linkage to the Chinese concept of face saving and '*renqing*' (returning a favour to another). In the Chinese culture, a person's face is extremely important and in not giving face to the other party is tantamount to denying the other party's pride and dignity (Brunner & Wang, 1988; Huang, 2000; Hwang, 1997). For this reason, the Chinese much prefer mediation as

a way to reach a solution that saves each other's face (Leung, 1987). Further, the Chinese concept of '*renqing*' means that the giving of face to the other party is a reciprocal act (Kirkbride, Tang, & Westwood, 1991). By compromising to reach a solution, whether via mediation or not, each party's face is maintained. The face-saving concept may explain why Chinese tend to repress conflicts rather than make them public to resolve them (Moran, Allen, Wichman, Ando & Sasano, 1994). According to Ting-Toomey et al., (1991), confronting conflict openly may result in a loss of face and a disruption of harmony, both of which are undesirable in the Chinese culture.

The confrontation model usually involves openly acknowledging conflicts and resolving them either by problem-solving (collaborating) or forcing (competition) strategies. Problem-solving is an integrating style characterised by a willingness to exchange information openly to address differences constructively so as to reach a conflict resolution that will benefit all parties (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993; Rahim, 1992). In Western cultures, an integration approach (problem-solving) is likely to occur between committed parties to the dispute. However, the success of using the problem-solving integrative (or collaborative) style is dependent on whether the parties are willing or if they are able to confront each other to resolve the issues in dispute (Spekman, et al., 1996).

Forcing is the strategy when power is used to make the other comply (Blake, Shepard & Mounton, 1964) and is often manifested in non-concessionary behaviour or forceful actions often resulting in a win-lose situation (March & Simon, 1958). Previous studies have found that Westerners are more likely to use the forcing strategy because of the relative high value placed on the competition and individual achievement, whereas the Chinese prefer bargaining and/or mediation (Leung, 1987; Leung & Lind, 1986; Morris et al., 1998; Swierczek, 1994).

2.8 Chapter Summary

A range of literature covering many aspects of acculturation has been reviewed in this chapter. From this base, scores of studies including migrant settlement issues, personal competencies and dispositions, the role of communication, and intercultural competencies and interactions are highlighted. The proliferation of literature suggests that migrants' acculturation experiences are subjected to cultural and psychological challenges and complexities as they go through the acculturative process. The literature also shows that some migrants have a propensity to handle their new environment in the host society better than others, acquiring and attaining skills along the way. To some, it means survival. To others, it is a conscious choice to assimilate into their adopted country's society.

The literature also reveals that some migrants experience culture shock (Adler, 1987; Gudykunst & Kim, 1992; McLaren, 1998; Taft, 1977) as they go through a period of disorientation. Culture shock may affect the self-esteem of migrants and as a defensive measure, they may withdraw into themselves. Stress often accompanies such negative experiences.

Migrants' competencies including communication skills play a significant role in their acculturation process. There is a substantial amount of literature by scholars who assert that possessing, or acquiring, a proficiency in the dominant language of the host society is crucial to migrants' adaptation into their new environment. The literature highlights the differences between Eastern and Western communication patterns, providing a better understanding of how people from high context and low context cultures communicate. Communication between people from different ethnic backgrounds can be challenging and problematic (Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1990). This often results in interpersonal conflict. There is a proliferation of literature on the causes and effects of conflict, conflict handling styles, along with various strategies for successful intercultural communication and conflict management techniques. Also reviewed is the rich literature on face theory

and face work, the significance of face concerns in interpersonal conflict, along with Confucianism and its pervasive influence on social relationships.

Conflict permeates a multitude of organisational processes. Indicative of its importance, there is a multitude of studies in various fields which extend to include organisational behaviour, social sciences, communication, information technology and marketing (Barki & Hartwick, 2004; Deutsch, 1990; Pondy, 1967; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986; Putnam & Poole, 1987; Thomas, 1976; 1992; Wall & Callister, 1995).

The literature illustrating the complexities of the acculturation process for immigrants is of important relevance to this study. The literature provides an informed academic base that aligns with the subject matter under study, which is to inquire into ethnic minority migrant Chinese's acculturation and workplace interpersonal conflict experiences in New Zealand.

Therefore, to summarise briefly on how the theories are related as a guiding theoretical framework for the analysis, the literature was initially reviewed from the premise of the researcher's own acculturation experiences which were grouped into several key themes. They were migrants' acculturation process, interpersonal conflict experiences in the workplace and migrants' responses, and the length of residence in New Zealand. At that initial stage, the research enquired into the linkage between all three themes. Subsequent to that, however, the interviews of 25 ethnic minority migrant Chinese in New Zealand revealed a number of gaps in the researcher's initial literature review, such as migrants' personality traits in the acculturation process and their communication competencies, prompting the researcher to review these topics. The iterative process further identified a significant gap which led the researcher to also review the literature on the influence of Confucian principles which include maintaining peace and harmony, according elders and people in authority with respect and face-saving behaviour.

Hence, from the iterative process, key theories emerged and these pertained to acculturation and its strategies, culture and culture shock, migrant's

personality traits or personal dispositions, migrant's language and communication competencies and style, migrant's face concerns in interpersonal conflict situations, and the omnipresent influence of Confucianism governing ethnic migrant Chinese' social interpersonal relationships including conflict handling. These key theories essentially formed the theoretical framework for the data analysis as discussed in Chapter 3. From this theoretical framework, the interview transcripts of the 25 participants were sorted, categorised and analysed using NVivo7.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes and explains the methodology used in this exploratory study. The purpose of this study is to investigate the acculturation experiences of ethnic minority migrant Chinese as they respond to the new environment in their host society. The emphasis of the investigation is on intercultural adaptations, especially in the precinct of workplace interpersonal conflict experienced by these migrants, and its many manifestations. To meet this purpose, the phenomenological, or interpretive methodology was deemed to be the best fit to fulfil the research aims (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

For the researcher, this phenomenological or interpretive methodology was the most appropriate given the interest in, and commitment to, understanding the phenomena from the individual (interviewed) person's perspective. It enabled the researcher to experience their world through their experiences (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Accordingly, an interpretive method was chosen whereby the researcher conducted interviews with the participants (referred to as 'interviewees' from here on).

3.2 Method

A qualitative research approach was adopted for this study. The research questions in this study were investigated through data obtained from face-to-face interviews of ethnic minority migrant Chinese in New Zealand. The interviews were conducted at a mutually agreed time and place. An environment of mutual trust was first established between the researcher and the interviewees, and re-established just before, during and on completion of each interview. This was achieved by producing documents containing Auckland University of Technology (AUT University) Ethics Approval information (see page 2 of Appendix A) and consistent verbal assurances of

confidentiality by the researcher. All the interviews were conducted personally by the researcher.

Face-to-face interview is dynamic and flexible which necessitated the researcher to adopt a non-directive, unstructured, non-standardised and open-ended interviewing stance (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The face-to-face interviews provided the researcher with rich data, and offered the opportunity to establish rapport with the individual interviewee as well as help to explore and understand complex issues (Sekaran, 2003). These were the reasons why this type of interview was selected for this exploratory study. Furthermore, the one-on-one interviews allowed the researcher to hear, observe and capture first-hand the words, feelings, descriptions, facial and physical expressions and gestures of each interviewee. Another advantage is that this method affords the researcher the chance to explore deeper to get to specifics and achieve deeper understanding and meanings of the interview content. Yet another benefit was that this method allowed both parties – researcher and interviewee – opportunities to clarify words, expressions and meaning instantaneously, while the interview was in session.

Interviews typically took up to an hour. The exceptions were four interviews which ran overtime by between 15 to 30 minutes. Another exception was the interview which was stopped about 40 minutes into the session in consideration of the particular interviewee's emotional state when recalling a singularly upsetting experience.

English language was the only medium used in all the interviews. English was chosen as the most appropriate language for the interviews for the following reasons:

Within Mainland China (Peoples Republic of China) itself, there are many dialect groupings (Chao, 1943). The main groups include Cantonese, Hakka and Fukien (Chao, 1943; Cohen, 1968). Within the main groups are many variations of dialects, for example, the Fukienese group includes Amoy, Swatow, Chaochow, Kienyang and Kienning dialects (Cohen, 1968). There

are further variations of dialects spoken by overseas Chinese. For instance, in Malaysia and Singapore, Fukien is commonly known as Hokkien. They are different variations of the spoken Hokkien dialect between the countries; in fact, within each country as well. Hokkien as a dialect is spoken differently. Various regions may take on different versions of expressions unique to that region and is understood and widely used in that region alone. The Hokkien dialect spoken by ethnic Chinese in the northern part of West Malaysia (Penang for example) varies from the one used in Kuala Lumpur. The researcher's mother tongue is Hakka which has a number of variations as well.

Given the many varieties and variations of different Chinese dialects, it will not be possible to conduct each interview in the interviewee's mother tongue because the researcher, whose mother tongue is Hakka, is not expected to be conversant in all the Chinese dialects. Therefore, the only practical course of action was for the researcher to use the language which is common to both the interviewees and the researcher, which is English. English is the preferred common medium to preserve the integrity of research questions posed at the interviews and interpretations of research findings. The researcher points out that though Hakka is her mother tongue, this dialect was not and cannot be formally studied and learned. As a mother tongue, the Hakka dialect (or other Chinese dialects) is used for everyday, basic conversation only. It lacks the vocabulary range as compared to English which was studied as a formal language.

Primarily unstructured, the interviews allowed respondents to talk freely about their personal views and experiences, and gave the researcher the opportunity to ask clarifying questions. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The majority of the transcripts were completed within 48 hours after the interview. At each of the interviews, observation notes were taken and in some instances, additional field notes were made immediately after the session.

The audio recordings captured all verbal communication, thus affording the researcher the opportunity to observe and make notes on non-verbal communication and cues – such as facial expressions, grimaces, hand gestures, physical body movements – which are often vital when the researcher tried to make sense of cryptic words and sentences expressed by the interviewee.

The interviews were primarily unstructured, barring some lead-in questions (see Appendix B). The main purpose of the unstructured style was to explore and probe into the various factors as they were introduced and arise (Sekaran, 2003). The unstructured style encourages interviewees to speak more freely and introduce whatever ideas, thoughts, feelings, etcetera, as they emerged during the interview sessions.

3.3 Research Design and Procedure

The researcher approached work colleagues, friends and acquaintances who fitted the criteria of ethnic migrant Chinese, meaning people of Chinese origin or ancestry, who have cultural and traditional origins and backgrounds. They were invited to participate, at which time the researcher provided a brief description verbally of the research project. This was immediately followed up by the researcher emailing the individual providing more detailed information, namely the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix A) and Consent to Participation in Research Form (see Appendix C). Once a participant's (interviewee) consent was received, arrangements for a mutually suitable time and venue for the interview were made. To achieve a better and more realistic demographic balance, friends in Wellington provided several male contacts as possible interviewees, two of whom were happy to participate but the third declined. In sum, 28 ethnic migrant Chinese people were approached but three declined. Out of the three, two said simply that they could not afford the time, whereas the third person felt uncomfortable about the research topic.

The first contact with prospective interviewees was through a variety of ways (face-to-face, phone, emails), explaining about the research project and its purpose and objectives.

As the researcher was emphatic about providing assurances surrounding privacy and confidentiality to interviewees, the one-on-one interviews (between the interviewee and researcher) were each conducted according to the preference of the interviewee, namely in private settings, either within closed doors of offices, meeting rooms or private residences. In order to preserve confidentiality, the researcher took every care to provide verbal and written assurances covering the privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity of each interviewee prior to each interview session. Before each interview, each interviewee was gently reminded that they had the option of halting the interview if they felt any discomfort. If the discomfort was acute, they had the option of discontinuing the interview; otherwise, they could opt to adjourn the interview to a later time/date, or that they could provide their recollection of the interpersonal conflict situation in written form after the interview. Lastly, should they wish, they would have the opportunity to access the AUT University Chinese Counsellor.

Just before an interview commenced, the researcher sought individual confirmation from all participants that they had each read the contents of the Participant Information Sheet which was previously provided to them. This was done for all 25 participants. At the same time, the researcher also sought confirmation from individual interviewee about their understanding of this research project, its aim and purpose. Every interviewee was given an opportunity to seek clarification on any aspect of the details as provided in the Participant Information Sheet.

Primary data were collected from the interviewees, assuring them of confidentiality, using a semi-structured interview protocol. Each interview commenced with an open-ended question and an invitation to the interviewee to talk about their earliest recollections of interpersonal conflict in their workplace (see Appendix B). Open-ended questions such as "Please

describe the conflict for me?” “How did the situation come about?” “How did you feel?” and “What was your initial response?” Open-ended questions ‘why’, ‘how’, ‘what’ and ‘in what way’ were used, thus necessitating the interviewee to reach deeper into a situation which they had experienced as well as to seek further clarification, understanding, information and background. The researcher felt that by using open-ended questions, richer data was obtained which is important for the robustness/integrity of this research.

Interpersonal conflict was described and explained by the researcher to include any “disagreement between two parties that involves incompatible goals, needs, or viewpoints or incongruencies and doesn’t sit comfortably with the interviewee.”

Prior to the interview session, interviewees were requested to complete a short questionnaire (see Appendix D). The questionnaire was to obtain and record demographics and confirm other relevant personal details such as status and length of interviewees’ residency in New Zealand and their occupation. The questionnaire was written in English and interviewees’ responses were also in English. The questionnaire required approximately five minutes to complete and self-administered. The completed questionnaire was returned to the researcher in person.

3.4 Sample Size

To meet the purposes of this study, interviewees were selected according to the following criteria. Interviewees had to be adults, of 20 years of age and above, ethnic migrant Chinese who work (or have previously worked) in an organisational setting. The interviewees comprised of the researcher’s work colleagues (with no dependant and/or power relationship), friends, acquaintances and their referred contacts. These are people whose age falls within the range of 20 years to 65 years.

The sample consisted of 25 migrants (15 females and 10 males) who were interviewed over a period of approximately 12 months, commencing September 2006. Out of the 25 interviewees, four were in Wellington and one in Hamilton, while the rest reside and work in Auckland. All interviewees are either permanent residents or citizens of New Zealand. At the time of the interviews, their length of residence ranged from five years to over two and a half decades. The occupations of the interviewees are within the categories of management, banking, finance and accounts, administration and clerical, information technology, and security. Migrants from different countries were represented in this sample. They were originally from China (Mainland or the Peoples Republic of), Indonesia, Malaysia (East and West), Singapore, Taiwan, and Vietnam. They are all of Chinese ethnic extractions.

It is pertinent to mention at this juncture that the researcher is of ethnic Chinese descent who is now a New Zealand citizen and who has been resident in New Zealand for the past 20 years. The researcher feels that the common thread with the interviewees, not only in Chinese extraction but also a migrant sharing a minority status in New Zealand, was instrumental in gaining access to them. More importantly, because of the commonalities and largely similar cultural backgrounds, the interviewees were more comfortable with opening up and sharing their intimate experiences and sometimes hurtful memories of their encounters in their adopted country. This contributed to the robustness of this study. In the words of Pio (2007), the process has a “richer class of experiences from which to extract more learnings to enhance practice and theory” and will “serve as a vehicle of awareness, sensitisation and emancipation for academia and the larger society, particularly the macro and micro worlds of work.” (p. 639), and allows a deeper exploration of the ethnic minority experience (Mirza, 1992, cited in Pio, 2005a).

3.5 Data Analysis

Interviewing 25 participants produced a large amount of primary data. The next step was for the researcher to make sense of the rich information collected through interviews and subsequently transcribed. This was done by using Nvivo7. It is pertinent to mention that Nvivo7 did not influence the use of English in the interviews. The transcripts were sorted, categorised and analysed. It provided more thorough interpretation and provided the researcher with enhanced data management. In practice, the researcher found that the efficiency and effectiveness of Nvivo7, especially in terms of data manipulation, enhanced the rigour and reliability of qualitative data analysis of this research. See Appendix F for examples of Nvivo7 Nodes in this research. A number of strong themes or categories emerged from the rich data collected at the 25 interviews. The data was categorised and coded into major themes. Similarly, secondary and ancillary themes were identified, grouped and coded.

Major themes which emerged were acculturation and assimilation, culture, personality and personal characteristics, conflict experiences and handling methods, and language proficiency. Secondary or ancillary themes were age and experience, workplace bullying and discrimination, training opportunities, and managerial/organisational encouragement.

Data analysis is probably the part of qualitative research that most clearly differentiates it from quantitative research methods and is also the least understood aspect of qualitative research, particularly for researchers familiar with traditional quantitative methods (Maxwell, 1996). There are many different approaches to qualitative data analysis and these are widely debated at some length in the social sciences literature (see Bryman & Burgess, 1994; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Dey, 1993; Mason, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 1993; Strauss, 1987, cited in Welsh, 2002). Whatever the approach, the goal of qualitative analysis is the transformation of data into findings; the challenge lies in making sense of huge amounts of

data by “reducing the volume of raw information, sifting trivia from significance, identifying significant patterns, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal” (Patton, 2002, p. 432).

Compared with traditional quantitative data collections, the amount of data generated by qualitative methods can be voluminous. On the one hand, trying to make sense of multiple pages of interviews and field notes can be overwhelming while, on the other hand, organising and analysing the data can appear to be an impossible task (Patton, 2002). The traditional way of organising and analysing data was done manually, by hand, a method still employed by some qualitative researchers (DeNardo & Levers, 2002). More and more qualitative researchers, including a number of noted qualitative theorists (DeNardo & Levers, 2002), have encouraged the use of qualitative data analysis software tools designed to manage data more efficiently throughout the course of a research project (see Berg, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Kelle, 1997a, 1997b; Merriam, 2001; Miles & Huebner, 1994; Morse & Richards, 2002; Patton, 2002; Silverman, 2000, 2001; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Tesch, 1990, cited in (DeNardo & Levers, 2002).

The use of computer software in qualitative research is becoming more popular because of its many advantages. Searches, retrievals, sorting, and re-arranging can be done with great speed, and they are more comprehensive than those that can be completed by hand (DeNardo & Levers, 2002; Merriam, 2001). The computer has the capacity for “organizing massive amounts of data, as well as facilitating communication among members of a research team” (Merriam, 2001, p. 166). Plass & Schetsche (2000) point out that in the future, qualitative researchers will probably analyse larger documents and a greater number of them.

While there are proponents for using computer software for qualitative research data analysis citing their many advantages, including facilitating an accurate and transparent data analysis process (see Morrison & Moir, 1998; Richards & Richards, 1994, cited in Welsh, 2002), there are, however, a number of dissidents. Some express concern that the software may “guide”

researchers in a particular direction (Seidel, 1991), distance the researcher from the data, and encourage quantitative analysis of qualitative data (Barry, 1998; Hinchliffe, Crang, Reimer & Hudson, 1997). Nevertheless, the proponents have put up a vigorous argument for the use of computer software, pointing out that it is important that qualitative research and data analysis are carried out in a thorough and transparent manner (Crawford, Leybourne & Arnott, 2000; Creswell, 1998; Kirk & Miller, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Seale, 1999, cited in Welsh, 2002).

There are three basic types of software used in the analysis of qualitative data. Some only retrieve text; others code and retrieve text; still others are referred to as theory-building software (Fielding, 1994). As Miles & Hueberman (1994) point out, it is not a matter of which computer software programme is the “best,” but rather, it is a matter of the researcher’s level of comfort using a computer and the particular purpose for using the specific software programme (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). NVivo7 is a computer software programme said to be one of the more popular packages used for qualitative research purposes (DeNardo & Levers, 2002). NVivo is used because it provides a variety of tools for manipulating data records, browsing and coding them (Richards, 1999) and it also facilitates annotating and gaining access to data records quickly and accurately. As summed up by DeNardo & Levers (2002), NVivo has tools for “recording and linking ideas in many ways, and for searching and exploring the patterns of data and ideas, effectively assisting in the management and synthesis of ideas.

Although software programmes can be used to facilitate data storage, coding, retrieval, comparing, and linking, Fielding (1994) and Patton (2002) are in agreement that only humans can perform the difficult task of analysis. An important facet, as pointed out by Welsh (2002), is that the “extent to which the software is exploited beyond the basic use is related to the expertise of the analyst” (para 9). The researcher of this study is reminded that ultimately computers and software are a means to an end, that they are simply tools that can be used to assist in the process (DeNardo & Levers, 2002). It is the researcher himself/herself who must ultimately decide which

themes have emerged, what name should be attached to each of them, and the meanings that are extracted (DeNardo & Levers, 2002).

3.6 Sample Characteristics

The contents of the completed short questionnaires are transposed in Table 1 below, giving a description of the sample.

Migrant's Country Of Origin	Male	Female	Age 20-35	Age 36-50	Age 51-65	Age 65	Current Occupation	Approx Years In NZ
(Mainland) China	*	*	*				Accountant (Linny)#	07
		*		*			Admin. (Suzie)	07
				*			Banking (Tony)	07
		*		*			Admin. (Mary)	10
Indonesia		*	*				Accountant (Felicia)	14
		*	*				Accounts (Mandy)	14
Malaysia	*	*		*			Mgmt (Alicia)	18
		*	*				Admin. (Annie)	18
			*				Admin. (Robert)	18
		*		*			IT (Karen)	19
	*			*			Bank officer (Candy)	08
				*			Architect (Terry)	15
				*			Hospitality (Martin)	26
		*		*			Mgmt (Warren)	05
	*	*		*			Qnty Surveyor (Penny)	20
		*		*			HR Officer (Lucy)	18
				*			Auditor (Charlie)	26
		*		*			Auditor (Cindy)	20
Singapore	*				*		Security (Paul)	20
	*	*			*		Service (Bruce)	20
					*		Accountant (Jenny)	17
		*		*	*		Auditor (Alan)	17
Taiwan		*		*			Accountant (Barbara)	27
Taiwan							Admin. (Grace)	18
Vietnam	*		*				Bank Mgr (Andrew)	18
Total	10	15	6	15	4	0		

Pseudonyms

Table 1:
Interviewees' Demographic Profile

Table 2 provides data showing the number and percentages of interviewees and their country of origin. The female to male ratio is representative of the friends and contacts of the researcher.

Migrants' home country	Male %	Females %	Total (M+F) Total %
China (Mainland)	1 4%	3 12%	4 16%
Indonesia	0 0%	2 8%	2 8%
Malaysia (East)	1 4%	2 8%	3 12%
Malaysia (West)	5 20%	5 20%	10 40%
Singapore	2 8%	2 8%	4 16%
Taiwan	0 0%	1 4%	1 4%
Vietnam	1 4%	0 0%	1 4%
Total	10 40%	15 60%	25 100%

Table 2:
Number and Percentages of Interviewees Depicting their Country of Origin

3.7 Reflective Stance

Similar to the 25 interviewees, the researcher is also an ethnic minority migrant Chinese, having left Malaysia 20 years ago to take up employment and residency in New Zealand. From a platform of personal learning and development, the researcher reflects and shares her own account of her acculturation experiences her host country. This is found in Chapter Five: Reflections, Limitations and Recommendations.

For the researcher, reflecting on her acculturation process crystallises, reaffirms and reinforces her learning over the years from her experiences of the complexities, which in her case ultimately advanced her personal and professional development in New Zealand. Leech & Trotter (2006, p. 175) “regard reflection as an active process, which allows the examination of difficult thoughts and feelings at sufficient depth for significant learning to be achieved”. This aligns with Trevithick (2005)’s assertion that, “Reflection

involves more than thinking things out carefully. It allows us to acknowledge that we are experiencing the situation we seek to understand and are a part of the interventions we are involved in providing" (p. 252). In short, the act of reflecting or engaging in a reflective stance promotes learning (Burton, 2000, cited in Leech & Trotter, 2006).

Studies or publications which also include reflection learning may also benefit others academically. The literature reviewed provide more indepth understanding in reflective learning. According to Bandura (1986, cited in Pajares, 1996), individuals possess a self system which gives them a measure of control over their thoughts, feelings, and actions. Bandura says this self system houses the individual's cognitive and affective structures and includes the abilities to symbolise, learn from others, regulate one's own behaviour, and engage in self-reflection. Bandura also says that the self system plays a prominent role in providing reference mechanisms for perceiving, regulating, and evaluating behaviour, which results from the interplay between the self system and external-environmental sources of influence.

Pajares (1996) interprets this to mean that in essence, Bandura (1986) believes that the self system serves as a self-regulatory function, by providing individuals with the capability to alter their environments and influence their own actions. Bandura (1986, cited in Pajares, 1996) states that through self-reflection individuals evaluate their own experiences and thought processes, and considers self-reflection the most uniquely human capability, for through this form of self-referent thought people learn through evaluating and altering their own thinking and behaviour.

Reflecting on the whole interview process, the researcher found that most interviewees were candid when relating their experiences regarding their individual experiences in New Zealand. While recollecting workplace interpersonal conflict situations, several became defensive and indignant, while others became upset while recalling painful experiences. The researcher instinctively and intuitively felt it prudent to use empathetic sounds

to 'diffuse' the situations, which apparently worked. However, the researcher felt it necessary to halt one interview when it became immediately apparent that the interviewee was becoming very upset when recollecting personal conflict situations and was extremely emotional. Overall, every interviewee said that they enjoyed the session as it gave them a safe forum to express their thoughts and feelings, with some saying that they have learned a lot about themselves and what they went through and how far they have come along in their adopted country. To some, the act of deliberate recall of their individual experience gave them an opportunity to reflect. The researcher aided this in part, by using open-ended questions during the interview such as, "Why did you do/say/think that?" This afforded them some personal insights and learning which they drew personal satisfaction from.

While the unstructured style of the interviews was best suited for this exploratory research, it presented the researcher with some challenges. The researcher found the first few interviews quite awkward and hard going; however, reflecting on it enabled the researcher to come up with ways and means to improve on her interview techniques. Examples included not finishing off sentences for interviewees when they paused for any length of time, introducing leading questions, and questions that only elicit 'yes' or 'no' answers.

3.8 Summary

In this Methodology chapter, the research method, research design and procedure, sample size, data analysis and a reflective stance were described in detail, backed up by reasons for their selections and informed by the relevant scholarly literature. Thus, a phenomenological or interpretive methodology was adopted as the best fit for the purposes of this study, along with a realistic sample size of 25 interviewees. The huge amount of data which needed to be analysed, done with robustness and integrity required the assistance of available data analysis software such as Nvivo. The latest

version of this software, Nvivo 7 was utilised in analysing the data presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the 25 interviews. The purpose of this study is to inquire into ethnic minority migrant Chinese's acculturation and workplace interpersonal conflict experiences in New Zealand. The analysis of the interview transcripts revealed major themes and secondary or ancillary themes, all of which were related to each other as presented and discussed in the following sections.

4.2 Findings and Discussion

The major themes which emerged from the 25 interviews were: acculturation and assimilation, culture, personality and personal characteristics, conflict experiences and handling methods, and the importance of language proficiency. The secondary or ancillary themes were age and maturity, workplace bullying and discrimination, managerial/organisational encouragement, and training opportunities.

Of all the major themes, interviewees devoted a substantial amount of time describing their acculturation and assimilation experiences, including interpersonal conflict encounters. Their comments are transcribed verbatim and appear in italics in the following pages within this chapter. This study found that active immersion is central towards successful acculturation and assimilation into New Zealand society.

4.2.1 Acculturation – a Conscious Choice

According to Earley (2002), migrants who are “able to adapt personal behaviours to be consistent with those of others...” (p. 290) are described as aculturally intelligent individuals. It involved migrants’ conscious choice to make deliberate changes to their personal practices and behaviour.

Tony (working in the banking sector, 7 years in New Zealand, originally from Mainland China): *“I studied the Western culture and I worked in multi-national companies in China (before coming to New Zealand) and I picked up a lot of values from the West cultures then. In New Zealand, the first value I picked up is DIY. Do it yourself, be independent and self-reliant. Back in China I hardly did any housework. We had a nanny and cleaners to help with the chores. We (Chinese) make up excuses about being busy at work. I think it’s part of the Kiwi culture because every man, mum and dad, including the kids, they all do housework. Not every family but 99% and that kind of labour or work make them actually happy and then I started trying do that myself and then I found I actually enjoy doing those work, in the garage and carpentry. My wife enjoys gardening. I found it enjoyable and I studied this and I think this is something I made quite a big change after coming to New Zealand. I try to do things by myself. It makes me feel more capable, more valuable, and good for my self esteem. That’s good.”*

Barbara (Accountant, 27 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore): *“I believe that an immigrant’s progress in the acculturation process is very much dependant on the immediate environment they choose to be in. For example, if you (immigrant) choose to stay with your own ethnic group, you’ll feel comfortable so much so that you don’t venture outside that group. You’re not going to get a lot of chances in knowing the Kiwi culture but if you venture out of that, and start to get more from the cultural side of the locals, then you’ll progress very fast. If you keep staying with your cultural group, then progress can be slow. In other words, the more you (actively) assimilate, the easier for you to feel comfortable, feel at home (in this country). It all comes*

down to how fast you can assimilate (into the host culture). There are a number of factors – opportunities that are open to you, the type of job you're in ... whether you're working in an Asian company or working in a Kiwi company, as well as personal choice. Do you want to stay with your own ethnic group and be comfortable in that fringe minority or would you like to assimilate to the mainstream so that's a personal choice. Sometimes it's a deliberate, personal choice because you're part of a wider community. You would be stepping out of your comfort zone."

Warren (working in management, 5 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"It depends on individual perspective. Two friends come to mind. One has been in New Zealand since his student days and he's probably used to the culture here....he tends to be more open. The other arrived three years ago and tends to still have his Asian stuff of dealing with people, example, shrewdness. Sometimes I tend to disagree with how he sees the locals in one sense. I guess it depends very much on people's perspective, how you want to deal with the locals."*

The above interviewees' observations are consistent with the studies of a number of scholars (see Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001; Earley, 2002; Kim, 1998), that sociocultural and intercultural factors including persistence in maintaining a strong network of ethnic friendships may slow down the acculturation process.

4.2.2 Acculturation – a Gradual Process

Interviewees generally found that the acculturation process was a gradual one, although some interviewees found that because of their previous exposure to different cultures, they acculturate at a faster rate especially in the first few years of migration. This is consistent with Lustig & Koester's (1996) study in which they argue that the rate and degree of adjustment to another culture vary great from person to person and from situation to situation.

However, one interviewee who immigrated to New Zealand 26 years ago found to his surprise that he had adopted what he described as the “Kiwi way” along the way unconsciously and only became conscious of this fact during the interview while recounting his experiences. Here are a few excerpts of those who found that the acculturation process was a gradual one and that the length of stay has a direct co-relation towards successful acculturation:

Barbara (Accountant, 27 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore): *“The length does help. The longer you stay here, the easier it becomes. It’s easier because you’re facing it every day (the exposure). For example, every day you catch a bus, you’ve the opportunity to speak to your neighbours while you’re waiting for a bus. You can actually have a few pleasant conversations with the people (locals). Such experience all adds up. One thing, say for example in Auckland. If you live in Howick and your neighbours are Asians you won’t have much opportunity than when you live where your neighbours are actually Kiwis. You pop over to say hello.”*

On the other hand, another interviewee said that for her, the major changes occurred in the first three or four years as a new migrant in New Zealand. Interestingly, this interviewee is the only one who felt that she has reached a plateau, observing that:

Felicia (Accountant, 14 years in New Zealand, originally from Indonesia): *“It’s a learning curve for me. There’s a point where you’d be plateau’d. I think I am close to that. I might not change very much because I’ve been here 14 years. I think the changes happened much when I started working the first three or four years, big changes there. I think I’m closer to that point, where I start to plateau. I don’t think I will change much, much more.”*

4.2.3 Acculturation – a Case for Changing and Adapting

While all 25 interviewees have one thing in common, that is of a need to change as illustrated from some of the excerpts above and below, a number of them are aware of the necessity to adapt, integrate and fit into the local environment, 'Do as the Romans do'. This is consistent with the work of Ward, Bochner & Furnham (2001, as cited in Padilla & Perez, 2003), who assert that regardless of their heritage and culture, newcomers (strangers, sojourners, refugees, or voluntary immigrants) must adapt to their new cultural environment in one form or another.

One interviewee (Tony, working in the banking sector, 7 years in New Zealand, originally from Mainland China) observed: *"I mean Chinese people, migrants, who've been here 10 years, even 20 years, a lot of them still can't speak good English because they didn't try hard enough to learn it basically. It's not because they are dumb. They work hard but they still try to keep...actually...they try to separate themselves from the people and the culture and things in this country, New Zealand, because they feel 'I'm Chinese'. Yes, I still feel I'm a Chinese but a Chinese doesn't mean you've got to use chopsticks rather than knife and fork. Nothing wrong with using (knife and fork). And Chinese doesn't mean you can't speak English. We're in this country and some things got to be changed, for example, you have to follow the laws here, you've got to speak the language. You're in this specific place, you got to adapt yourself into it. Although you can keep a lot of things of your own (culture) if they do not offend others nor hurt others' feelings or damage other people's lives. For example, I can still keep speaking Chinese but not at the workplace if I am surrounded by Kiwis and they may feel nervous if I keep talking in Chinese."*

4.2.4 Acculturation – Perceived Positive Effects Resulting from Changed Behaviour

The same interviewee (Tony, working in the banking sector, 7 years in New Zealand) also learned to change his behaviour and thinking, adapting to what he perceives to be an aspect of dominant culture in New Zealand, which is about being forthright and to discard self-deprecation and modesty. He said, *“(Now) I’m not afraid...afraid is not the accurate word, for example, my old CV would look a lot humbler but now I would put a lot of stuff into my CV. Yes, I know now if I’m going to send out a CV, I would be, how do you say it, be very bold and I would be very proud to lay down a lot of things which I would probably won’t put in my old CV. Well, different thinking. Previously I was thinking it’s not worth mentioning it. That’s very typical Chinese – not worth mentioning, don’t want to bother other people. Now I’ve changed and I’ve learned from the locals that actually this is the correct way of doing it because now you’re in this place. I’ve moved from Place A to Place B and Place B is the rule. This is the way. Once you’re in Rome you do as the Romans do.”*

The above account by Tony indicates that he perceives benefits from changing his behaviour and aligning it to the dominant culture. In essence, Tony has displayed what Kim (1979; 1994b) describes as “adaptive potential”. This is evidenced by Tony’s willingness and preparedness to adopt and adapt to the new culture and behaviour.

Other migrants interviewed also find that overcoming their cultural, traditional and personal inhibitions and putting into practice what they observe as typical behaviour of the dominant culture in their host country has many benefits, some of which are discussed below. Like Tony, these interviewees display a tendency to transpose their observations into changed behaviour in themselves by mimicking behaviour. This is consistent with Andersen’s (1994) and Barnlund’s (1975) findings in which they posit that culture is

basically a phenomenon, and is absorbed largely through observations, imitation and through modelling behaviour.

Jenny (Accountant, 17 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore): *“Another thing I picked up very quickly from the New Zealand culture is that when they do something, they always let everybody know what they’ve done, it’s their idea and everything, whereas we Asian (Chinese), we are modest and we always keep quiet. But now I picked that up, I blow my trumpet as well so the moment I did something good and a new idea or something that’s benefiting the company, I do say that this is my idea. I’m not shy to do it anymore. I make it a point that they (bosses) know it’s from me. Yes, aggressive now!”*

Penny (Quantity Surveyor, 20 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *“I realised that you’ve got to (not be afraid, to speak up and) ask for what you want. However, you’ve got to be considerate to them (bosses) too. The people here, maybe not all but most of them are open to discussions, open to your views, they accept your views and they don’t mind even if you fight with them, like me and my present boss. We know it’s nothing personal, it’s just the job and so that’s really helpful to have that understanding.”*

4.2.5 Immersion into the Host Culture

All interviewees were unanimous in thinking that they need to find a way to immerse themselves into the New Zealand culture with a number actually using the term ‘When in Rome, do as the Romans do’ during the interview. Interviewees spoke of their observations of the differences in local customs, practices and behaviour, some of which are illustrated below. It is obvious that these are significant differences to what they were accustomed to, how they would normally behave. Interviewees talked about the major differences. For many, it represented a big learning curve. Here they share their learning

experiences mainly through observing the behaviour of the local people in New Zealand:

Lucy (HR Officer, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"It's a Kiwi culture to be outspoken and to speak up for yourself. I found that in the New Zealand education system as over here the younger kiddies are given the freedom and encouragement with their school project, research work or anything, whereas in my home country, the teacher is the boss and information is poured into students to be absorbed. That's the way we were taught. We were not able to question because you assumed the 'teacher knows best'. Over here students are given the freedom of choice, freedom of expression. In the workplace, I learned a lot from my manager, learned to challenge each other's thoughts."*

Annie (Administrator, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"What I've learned from the Kiwi people here, like when you say you want something, you have to tell them straight (direct, no beating round the bush). Not like the Chinese culture, not quite direct. The locals find it irritating."*

Jenny (Accountant, 17 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore): *"...we are more into their (Kiwi) culture in the sense that we picked it up. I feel that in order to be with them, work with them, we NEED to be like them in a way, copy (emulate) their behaviour."*

Bruce (working in the service industry, 20 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore): *"This phrase has influenced me a lot, 'When you are in Rome, do as the Romans do'. From day one I've to embrace the culture here, I've had to."*

Paul (Security Officer, 20 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"Kiwis don't accept your (migrant's) culture sometimes and this may lead to conflicts so you have to learn to work in the Kiwi culture (way) as far as possible, because you are in Rome."*

Martin (working in the hospitality sector, 26 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"I think Western (Kiwi) culture they are quite different. They are more independent in their thoughts. I mean from my observations of my friends of the Western culture, normally in terms of like family, if there's anything they disagree they normally just voice their opinion. Even at work, I've seen that at work. If they don't agree with something, they do voice their opinion. I think I actually picked that up along the way. I mean when I first started work I was quite subservient but later on I sort of try to pick up those things and be a bit more dynamic and more aggressive. The change happened along the way, slowly. I mean not all the time but I do slowly voice my opinion. At the end of the day I still carry out what they want me to do but I will voice my opinion and say, 'Hey, I don't agree with this, you know.' I can't pinpoint when I started to change but I just know I've changed. Do as the Romans do, unconsciously, not consciously."*

The above excerpts illustrate the interviewees' need, as migrants, to immerse into the local New Zealand culture. Padilla & Perez (2003) posit that there are a number of factors that influence the ways in which people acculturate. This is illustrated by Warren, an interviewee who migrated to New Zealand a few years ago who rationalised his behaviour change in an erudite manner.

Warren (Manager, 5 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"I find I'm not restricted in the workplace by my own cultural norms if I put them aside. I don't feel guilty about that (putting aside his own cultural norms) because I'm dealing with the local people (Kiwis) at the same level where the local culture expectations are. But if I were to hold onto my cultural norms when dealing with the locals, let's say dealing with my senior managers and be submissive and kow-tow to them, I don't think it would work because their expectations are different. They expect me to help them, (by) disagreeing with them in some aspects."*

4.2.6 Acculturation – Ease and Speed Vary from Person to Person

A number of interviewees attributed their relative ease of assimilation into the local New Zealand culture to previous exposure to different cultures, or working for and alongside expatriate work colleagues in their home country. According to Lustig & Koester (1996), some people have the skills and abilities to move with ease among different cultures, and respond to different environments. This is illustrated by the comments from the following interviewees:

Charlie (Auditor, 26 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *“I actually worked in London as well and I’ve worked in Singapore and basically I worked in multinational organisations – British, American, Arabian, Japanese. I’ve been exposed to all different cultures so I suppose in some ways you learn to adapt. You don’t actually know the culture until you’re in, so because of my job, the exposure, you learn to manage all that.”*

Tony (working in the banking sector, 7 years in New Zealand, originally from Mainland China): *“I studied the Western culture, and I worked in multinational companies and I picked up a lot of values from the Western cultures and I can speak up straightforward, directly.”*

An interviewee was asked if he hadn’t been in that job where he interacted and reported to European expatriates in Malaysia, how he would have behaved or reacted to interpersonal conflict in New Zealand when he first emigrated here. He had this to say:

Warren (Manager, 5 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *“I think it would be very difficult. Number one is that if I do not have enough interaction with say Europeans, I think I would be more submissive, (would have) the assumption that European race is more master-servant sort of relationship. Probably I would make all the mistakes I made in my previous*

job back in Malaysia. Probably I would not thrive as well as I'm (thriving) right now. I would say...just adopt and adapt to it (the local New Zealand culture).

Similarly, making a conscious effort to actively mix with the dominant culture has been shown to help migrants adjust to their new environment. This requires flexibility and adaptability to values and practices that may be different from their own. An interviewee who arrived in 1989 and therefore has been here for 18 years has this to contribute. Alicia (Manager, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia) said, *"Over the years I've learned to, as I meet and associate with assertive people, that definitely helped me to adjust."* Alicia recounted her positive experience in her very first job in New Zealand as it provided her with the first opportunity to integrate with New Zealanders as a new migrant. She said, *"(My first job in New Zealand) was a good experience because living with a New Zealand family I got to integrate into their culture a little bit, so that's good."*

For one interviewee (Paul, Security Officer, originally from Malaysia) who arrived in New Zealand just over 20 years ago, the need to cultivate his relationship with team members is significant to him. To fully acculturate into the host society, Paul needed to feel a sense of acceptance by the locals. This is consistent with Van den Berghe's (1981) assertion that for assimilation to take place, it requires acceptance of migrants by the people of the dominant culture. Paul believed that to be accepted, he felt that he needed to follow the dominant culture and participate in their custom. It is a two-way street. Paul believes that, *"Even though they (Kiwis) accept you, you got to cultivate your relationship with all your team members. You got to understand the way they work and their (Kiwi) culture, work ethics, the Kiwi culture ethics. Say on a Friday, they want to work till 4:00 pm and they will go for a drink and have a bit of relaxation. You have to follow their culture. You don't work till 5:00 pm and join them later – they don't like it. You've got to be sensitive to that, and be part of that group. You got to follow their work culture, very important."*

Another interviewee's account lends credence to the abovementioned two-way street. This interviewee (Barbara, Accountant, originally from Singapore) arrived in New Zealand in 1980 and is an experienced accountant presently working for a major banking institution in New Zealand. Barbara said that speaking and opening up helps build her interpersonal relationships with others. For Barbara, her acculturation process was gradual: *"It's a gradual thing (for me). The thing is Asian culture is not into divulging too much about their personal life. My personal life is my personal life, none of your business, but Kiwis see it differently, like it's a conversation piece. Now, for me, I'm quite willing to open up and share. Over the years, years of mixing with locals, I've got used to that. It impacts on your interpersonal relationships, it actually does. You open yourself more so the other party will think, 'Oh yes, she is approachable'. And not only that, it increases your social contact (with the locals) and bridge that gap by communicating."*

4.2.7 Saving Face to Allow Others the Grace of Exiting ("Mien-tze" in Mandarin; "Bei-mean" in Cantonese)

The many accounts from the migrants interviewed for this study all appear to indicate that speaking up, voicing opinions, being open and direct are virtues of the dominant culture that they think worth emulating because they now live in New Zealand. However, some interviewees felt that emulating the perceived dominant culture's forthrightness must be tempered with tact, respect and 'face-saving'. However, the ethnic minority migrants' cultural orientation and the deep-rooted influence of Confucian principles which value respect for those in authority and social harmony (Lustig & Koester, 1996; Yum, 1994) meant that giving and saving others 'face' (Brunner & Wang, 1988; Huang, 2000; Hwang, 1997; Leung, 1987) still has strong significance for them. Here are some of their comments:

Penny (Quantity Surveyor, 20 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"...(but) you still have to be tactful even though you say what's on your mind. That's why sometimes, through my observation of people, some people say what's on their mind but then it's taken wrongly, they weren't*

tactful. Even though they want openness, they also appreciate if you're considerate about their feelings too."

Warren (Manager, 5 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"I guess along the way growing up, probably interacting with my parents, friends or whatever, or being Asian, I always believe in giving people face, 'bei-mean'. It's a cultural thing. 'Bei-mean' (literally mean "to give face"). I realise that when it comes to dealing with people whether the person is Asian or Caucasian or whatever race, people always have an ego in them. That's something I learned, people have ego in them. People want to feel nice. And especially in the position of being a manager, right now I need more of that, to give people the grace of exiting, exiting when the tension (of the confrontation/conflict) becomes too unbearable. I can say, 'I disagree with you, Sir' but then at the end of day, I've to put it in such a way it saves face for my boss. For me at the end of the day I want to have that rapport with my (New Zealand) colleagues. It's also a means of survival, I guess, as an Asian working in a New Zealand context. I don't burn my bridges. I guess it comes from the Malaysian environment that besides saving face we need to build networks...saving face (such that) at the end of the day you don't offend people."*

Felicia (Accountant, 14 years in New Zealand, originally from Indonesia): *"My (Chinese cultural) background still plays a part on how to handle a situation (conflict) well, that is, you don't confront it really hard out (straight out). You don't make it into a problematic way. You try to be more sensitive. I can see that the Kiwis are more direct and abrupt but for me I'm more.....softer. I think it's just a style. You don't have to be abrupt and mean to get your message across. You can use a soft and diplomatic way to get your message across. (Need) to be sensitive to others. I think if you are sensitive in understanding the other person, your long term relationship is better. If you're abrupt with someone and he/she is really offended, one day it will jeopardise your relationship. Yeah, I always believe I don't need to offend people to get the message across."*

The above interviewees' accounts relating to face-saving and protecting relationships have their cultural roots in Chinese values. Face-saving and in the words of the above interviewee, "...to give people the grace of exiting..." is aligned with the findings of Ting-Toomey (1994). Ting-Toomey asserts that in conflict situations, people from a collectivist culture 'give face' to the other party by letting them find their way out of a conflict situation gracefully.

In addition to the seven themes discussed above, the interview data also reveal that while there are some common experiences, the 25 interviewees mostly have unique personal acculturative experiences. Interviewees' length of residence in New Zealand, self-confidence and maturity (experiences through the progress of time), the amount of interactions with members of the dominant culture, personality and attitude are elements which determine how quickly and successfully they acculturate. This is supported by Lustig & Koester (1996) who argue that the speed and degree of adjusting to a different culture vary from person to person. The interviewees' reflections on these elements are discussed below.

4.2.8 Length of Residence in Host Country

Most interviewees felt that the length of time definitely helped for the longer they spend in New Zealand, the more opportunities they have to learn and pick up how Kiwis deal with interpersonal situations. The sample excerpts given below represent typical comments from the majority of those who participated in the interview. In analysing these migrants' comments, it soon became obvious that it was not so much the length of time per se, but rather it was to do with other dynamics, such as the individual migrant's personality, their attitude and conscious choice. It is conceded that the length of time provide more opportunities for the migrants to continue learning and growing as they move along their acculturative process.

Barbara (Accountant, 27 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore):
"Over the years, when you stay long enough, you start to use some of the

(local) terms as you understand the terms more. Different way of saying things and you start to appreciate jokes too. Whereas before I was probably more shy (but I've built up) confidence over the years and you open yourself up to mix with other groups and not just to mix with your own ethnic group."

Andrew (Bank Manager, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Vietnam):
"I've been in New Zealand since primary school days. Basically, from there on I've involvement with the local Kiwis so I understand the way they work and socialise, so didn't have many difficulties myself. No doubt there's some discrimination about race and stuff like that but it's just something none of us can avoid."

Jenny (Accountant, 17 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore):
"I've been here for so long (17 years). Probably I learned their (Kiwi) culture."

Interestingly, one interviewee (Tony, who works in the banking sector is originally from Mainland China, having arrived in New Zealand 7 years ago) was quite sure that the length of time in New Zealand has no impact on migrants. Tony: *"I don't think it's a matter of time. I don't agree it's a matter of time. It doesn't mean the longer you stay here or the longer time you spent with the locals the more you adapt. I mean there are heaps of people who have been in this country a lot longer than I have been who are still quite anti Kiwi, I mean the Chinese."*

In the main, the study found that interviewees noticed gradual changes to themselves in various ways as well as developing themselves culturally as time progresses in their adopted land, compared with the initial period as new migrants. In the words of Barbara (Accountant, 27 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore) who initially found her new (Kiwi) environment frightening: *"Pretty much what the boss said, I do, I wouldn't question because he's the one in authority. But now, because I have been in this country for 20-odd years and during that period, I've actually developed not only culturally, I'm more used to the Kiwi way plus also personal development of myself."*

However, although the findings found evidence in the significance of migrants' length of residence in the host country as illustrated in the above extracts, there are other determinants as well – personality and personal choice. These are discussed below.

4.2.9 Personality, and Personal Choice

Consistent with Kim's (1979; 1994b) studies on migrants' predisposition or adaptive potential, several interviewees attribute personal attitude, personality and character as prime indicators of how migrants successfully and speedily acculturate into the New Zealand society. In relation to handling interpersonal conflict in the New Zealand workplace, one interviewee said it wasn't so much the length of time in the country but she rather thought it has a lot to do with a migrant's personality and age and maturity.

Lucy (HR Officer, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"It's my personality. I've always been an outspoken person, always been sociable."*

About opening oneself up in communication and dialogue with locals, Barbara (Accountant, 27 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore) said, *"It's a personal thing too. It depends on personality. Much more an Asian culture, I think you're more concerned about a number of things such as whether they like me, whether they can understand me, whether they can understand and relate to my story (what I'm saying). Yes, it depends on your personality and personal choice on how fast you assimilate into a new country. What are you going to do about it? You either keep to yourself, keep to your (cultural) group, or do you really want get into the (host) society, assimilate into the society and be part of it?"*

Terry (Architect, 15 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"I think it's a combination of (my) personality, manners, personal attitude and also I think it's my initiative to actually understand and fit in well into the (New Zealand) society. Do as the Romans do. Because you're in a foreign land."*

That's one thing very important for me. Also, you've got to be able to be flexible. You cannot bring your old self into another country. You've to fit and adapt to suit (local environment). If you don't make the effort to learn...how can you progress, how can you fit in well?

Terry first arrived as a new migrant 20 years ago but returned to his home country (Malaysia) and stayed there for approximately seven years for professional career and family reasons. Terry returned to New Zealand with a young family about two years ago. The following extract shows that coming back to New Zealand as a migrant was his personal choice. Terry's story illustrates his affinity with the ways of his adopted country.

Terry: *"I've been longing to come back to New Zealand because I like the lifestyle, I like the people. After six years away, I still find that people here are still tolerant to migrants. What I can conclude is that To be able to fit into a society, you must be able to master the language, don't mean speaking the Queen's English, but be able to converse and be able to understand well, be able for example to crack a joke, be able to understand what they're (locals) talking about. That's the most important, to fit in well. To fit in..first of all you've got to respect the people, wherever they are coming from. I'm not saying that you forego what you've inherited, you still keep to your old good things (habits, values), take the best of both worlds, which means Malaysian and New Zealand, and you sieve through and you get the best out of these two ingredients. You mix them together and that becomes one single entity. That's how I feel, I feel comfortable living here (New Zealand)."* This interviewee put a lot of emphasis on the importance of not only being competent in the language of the host society, but also understanding nuances of meaning. This is consistent with Kim (1994b) who posits that many migrants will discover the significance of language proficiency and its part in determining how quickly they adapt to the new environment.

Knowing one has to change and adapt to the local customs and practices is one thing but actually putting the changes into practice is another, as candidly shared by one migrant (Grace). Grace (Administrator, 18 years in

New Zealand, originally from Taiwan) said, *“From my observations and since I started working in a tertiary institution a few years ago, I had more chances to deal with Kiwis. Prior to that, I was a student and thus didn’t really have the opportunity to get along with or speak with Kiwi people, because we were sort of still in a Chinese circle. I know I’ve to exercise it, adopt the (Kiwi) way, but knowing is one thing and doing is another. Sometimes I just don’t have the guts.”*

Further, for most migrants the initial exposure to a foreign environment where making sense of the different behaviours and customs of the local people will only come with the progress of time in their adopted country. The first experiences may seem daunting and filled with challenges and hurdles as the new migrant grapples with a host of unfamiliar things, including language and its local usage. This can be strange and quite frightening to the new migrant, as explained by an interviewee who migrated to New Zealand more than 20 years ago from Singapore. Barbara said, *“My first job as a new immigrant provided me with valuable experience. It’s the first time I worked in a Kiwi environment, everything’s new to me. It was pretty much quite frightening – you’ve to deal with the language, accent, and the working style.”*

Conflict is a natural part of human interpersonal relationships and given the many different challenges migrants face while they go through the acculturation process, it is almost inevitable that interpersonal conflict occur between ethnic minority migrant Chinese and the members of the host society. The differences in their socialised and cultural behaviour, migrants’ lack of proficiency in the dominant language in the host society are prime elements. From a learning and informed perspective, it was instructive for this study to inquire into the various dynamics in the interpersonal conflict experienced by migrants in New Zealand, as well as their conflict handling methods. The findings are discussed below.

4.3 Conflict Experiences and Handling Methods

Interviewees were requested to recall their interpersonal conflict experiences in the workplace, starting from the very first one if they could think back that far. This was important to explore whether the length of stay in New Zealand has an influence on a migrant with respect to interpersonal conflict in their workplace. Upon reflection, a couple of interviewees said that they have followed the ways used by the people in the dominant culture when handling workplace conflicts. To do this, they had to make a conscious decision to change their own cultural thinking and attitude. What follows are quotes from two male and one female interviewees. The first one is a bank manager whose family migrated to New Zealand when he was a youth. The second quote is from a migrant who came across to New Zealand initially to study accountancy and who is currently running a thriving business. The third quote was a contribution from a female migrant who is an administrator.

Andrew (Bank Manager, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Vietnam):
"I'd say I'd have unconsciously learned from the locals as to how they confront with an issue (conflict) and slowly learn the way later on when you hit a similar situation, you sort of have a bit of knowledge which you've observed previously what they've done. I'd say I've taken some of their ways throughout my working life. I definitely taken some of my work colleagues in the way they approach the issues and stuff like that. Definitely have. I'd say I'll probably become more and more confident in that area (handling interpersonal conflict) as I progress through different levels in my banking career which (incidentally) helps to build up my confidence. I really can't see any drawbacks in the future such that if an issue crops up, I would say definitely confront the issue."

Martin (working in the hospitality sector, 26 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"(Where encountering conflict) ...you just have to tell people how you feel. I probably picked this up along the way, unconsciously. It's just like a kid learning things – you pick up things along the way gradually and*

that's what I think happened to me, learned along the way. You know, just unconsciously follow what people (here) do."

Annie (Administrator, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"I find that generally Chinese people, culture, they just don't want to make any trouble. If anything's not alright, they just move on, they just don't voice out. They just keep quiet, just go, don't want to make trouble, just move on. I was like that in the beginning but not now. Because I learned my lesson. I thought (to myself) if I keep doing like that (keeping quiet), you're not going anywhere. There are people who'll just step on top of you. It's different here. That's what I've learned here."*

The following is an excerpt of a female interviewee who has been in New Zealand for six and a half years. It shows her understanding of Kiwi culture with respect to dealing with interpersonal conflicts:

Suzie (Administrator, 7 years in New Zealand, originally from Mainland China): *"Because when I get to know the culture more, understand the society and the people here more, I think I know better what way I should use when I deal with the conflict but at the beginning, maybe I don't really understand the Kiwi people, about how they think, what ways they usually use to deal with conflicts. After I worked here and observe conflicts and how the people here deal with the conflicts, I learned something from them. I learned they're very straight sometimes."*

The study found that not everyone agrees that the locals (Kiwi people) are open and direct in the face of interpersonal conflicts. These are some of the comments:

Suzie: *"Sometimes they also judge the situation, whether it's suitable to deal with as obvious conflict, or just keep (ignore; don't address), or use other ways to minimise the conflict. Yeah, they use different ways too. It depends on the relationship between the two people, the parties. If they think it's proper, they will talk face-to-face, bring up (the issue) straight away. Being*

straight (open, direct). Sometimes they use indirect ways to solve the conflict, like Asian people. So it's not always like we think the people here are direct, always straight (direct), but generally they are more straight than Asian (Chinese) people. From my observations of how Kiwis handle conflicts, I know how to avoid conflict, how to solve conflict, how to better deal with the people (Kiwis)."

Suzie also noticed, "(From my observations of)...the real life in the workplace, I understand the Western country people deal with the conflict quite differently from the Asian people. But generally, from the beginning till now I combine the Western and the Chinese way when I deal with conflicts. I'm not always quiet but I certainly will talk it out when I think it's...if I feel I should."

Paul (Security Officer, 20 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): "Kiwi culture is quite interesting. I learned through experience in a subsequent organisation. They keep to themselves and they complain to the boss behind your back and you're completely oblivious to what's going on. You don't realise it, you don't know anything about it. Although they (colleagues) can be nice to you in front of you, they can stab you in the back. They continued to be nice to me. It's a very strange situation and I've never come across it before. You don't even know what the complaint is all about."

Paul: "From my observations, Kiwis do a lot of talking behind other people's backs. I find that they don't confront...not really, but they will say something (about the person) when the person is not there. In front of them, they act as though they're good buddies."

Terry (Architect, 15 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): "My observations...they (Kiwis) handle conflicts very diplomatically. Sometimes they won't tell you their true feelings, they would keep it to themselves. Why I say this is because I find Kiwis very conservative (compared to Australians). They'll not tell you their true feelings. They tend to keep it. That's my observation and experience. But you have to reach a point where they know

you well; until they know you well, they won't start to open up. Even with professionals...the phrase I always hear is, 'Yes, it's correct, you're right BUT I think it should be this, this. They wouldn't say to you, 'No, I don't think this is correct.' Which is good, because you've been diplomatic."

In many instances, interviewees unwittingly felt that they needed to learn the ways of the dominant culture and then to emulate them, for instance, speaking up. To do so would mean that they would need to make changes to their thinking and behaviour with intent, such as overcoming traditional barriers and cultural inhibitions.

Interviewees spent a substantial amount of time talking about their observations and perceptions of the people in the dominant culture's behaviour in conflict situations. Interviewees observed that Kiwis are generally more open and direct in their approach in their dealings with people and felt that this is a positive aspect. In a sense, the interviewees' willingness to emulate local behaviour is integral to the process of their acculturation in New Zealand. The following comments are representative of the common themes of all the 25 people interviewed.

Robert (Administrator, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"In New Zealand, it's about being assertive, that's the culture here. You speak up. You want to survive here, you need to speak up; otherwise, people will bully you. Be assertive because people here will look at how you behave, like for people who are quiet (and submissive), they are likely to be bullied. That's the culture here. The Caucasians, they speak up more and we need to be like them as well. If you're quiet, it attracts more bullying, if some people don't know how to behave themselves and abuse their power. From a personal experience, I felt that my manager was unfair to me so I spoke up, so she talked to me better."*

Lucy (HR Officer, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"I (observed) that they (Kiwis) are more outspoken. I guess it's from their school days where they've been exposed to expressing themselves and their*

views. That's the main difference between the Chinese culture and the Kiwi culture, because in (our) School, we never had any character-building, it's just study, study, study, no people subjects. We just listen (to the teachers, and absorb). Coming from Malaysia, we think women should be submissive. Maybe it's our upbringing and the country we were brought up in. Now that I'm here (in New Zealand), we are actually encouraged to speak up, express our views and all that. They encourage us to speak up at meetings. Like in schools here, the kids are encouraged to do that too (speak up, express their views)."

Grace (Administrator, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Taiwan): *"I know that the culture in the Western world people are straightforward about their own rights, their own feelings. They don't hide their feelings away (they're open). With friends' advice and encouragement, I thought I should do something about it, just try to exercise it, like adopting the Western way.*

Annie (Administrator, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"I learned from observing and watching how people (locals) interact with each other. This has helped me in handling interpersonal conflict. They (Kiwis) tend to verbalise. So now when there's anything I'm not happy about I will bring it out. This is just from what I've learned, what I've seen.*

Penny (Quantity Surveyor, 20 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"Over the years I've observed how people deal with...how they actually handle interpersonal conflicts. I've observed that people are more open and receptive. I've put that into practice and it works for me. What has worked for me is compromise, that both sides are prepared to take. The way I would deal with things is that we can always talk about it and discuss. That's the way (learned) I'd deal with things now. So now if staff are not happy, I'd advise them to voice their views! I used to resolve issues by crying and not saying anything but slowly I learned how to just talk about things. I do want to add that having the right boss does make a difference and I've always been lucky (with bosses) who've taught me."*

Jenny (Accountant, 17 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore): *"From my personal observations, I think what they do is to just tell you (open, direct). I mean they have no reservations or sensitivity as to what they are going to say. If they don't like certain habits of yours, they'd just tell you directly. For example, if you have body odour, they just tell you, 'Go and spray on something or take a shower.'"*

Jenny (Accountant): *"In a way I felt that the Kiwi way, being outspoken, being truthful, is good BUT you've got to look at the other person, how would they feel, how would they take it? For the Asian (Chinese) culture, we are too reserved, too timid. We should learn to speak up but I think...something in the middle would be good. You've to think of the other party before you say something. Sometimes it really hurts."*

Penny (Quantity Surveyor, 20 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"People here (New Zealand) are more open. At least those I'm working with. They'll be happy to resolve any issues if you put it correctly, politely, to them. (I've learned) when you're angry, don't discuss anything with anybody because it just won't happen. You've to wait for the right time. I feel that they are more receptive through discussions and to admitting whether they are guilty/wrong or not and they are prepared to resolve the issue. Knowing this has made me more open, more frank to sort of...even admit my mistakes. If I've made a mistake, I don't mind admitting it. They'll accept it, they don't blame you. This realisation came to me in my 6th or 7th year in New Zealand."*

Robert (Administrator, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"In New Zealand if you speak up, you won't be kept away. In Asia you speak up you create trouble, they can fire you. In New Zealand, human rights are better here. My uncle in Singapore spoke up and he lost his job. For that reason, people (Chinese) say, 'Chin, chin, chai, chai' meaning be quiet, don't create more trouble, let it go."*

Of the 25 people who were interviewed for this study, most of them said they had to learn to speak up for themselves to address issues as they emerge, including conflicts and confrontations. For many migrants, they have to overcome their familial and educational conditioning, cultural inhibitions and self-imposed restrictions, as related by the following four migrants:

Barbara (Accountant, 27 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore): *“The Asian way, there’s conditioning, maybe early childhood conditioning from family, teachers. You’re taught not to be a trouble-maker. Told not to cause too much confrontation... it’s not nice. In Singapore (my home country), the working environment is very much managed like in a school, where the principal says this and everybody do as they’ve been told. If you don’t do what you’ve been told you’d be punished.”*

Grace (Administrator, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Taiwan): *“Not always (able to speak up). Because I’m afraid of breaking up the relationship with the people I interact with or I’ve a concept that when people get into conflicts, they break up their relationship. For example, with my supervisor, if our relationship breaks up, I don’t know how to face or how to talk to her anymore.”*

Mary (Administrator, 10 years in New Zealand, originally from Mainland China): *“There’ll always be a difference because of our different culture...because of who we are (Chinese) that you can’t really fully assimilate and deal with interpersonal conflict at their (Kiwis) level. You can’t be exactly the same as the Kiwis, (in terms of) solving a conflict.”*

Sometimes, speaking up to confront an issue is simply not possible, according to this migrant. Cindy, an auditor who has been in New Zealand for two decades felt that speaking out to address some issues concerning her work environment was not an option. Cindy felt that the only avenue open to her was to pray. Cindy said, *“...rather than confronting and resolving a conflict with my manager, I resorted to praying.”*

Some felt that they had to learn to speak up for self-protection. For most, speaking up does not come easily; in fact, it takes self-confidence and courage. Here are some of the contributions.

Bruce (working in the service industry, 20 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore): *"...because over the years I've learned that if you don't stand up for yourself, nobody will. Because from my past experience in New Zealand, I find that you need to do that (be vocal, stand up for yourself). You can't rely on other people to stand up for you, regardless of what. You just need to stand up for yourself. This means that I let the other person know that hey, this is not right, or hey, you're looking at it the wrong angle. Just be vocal and then to create an awareness with the Kiwis here."*

Terry (Architect, 15 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"I think you'll need to have the courage to speak up. You cannot stand in a corner and hope to get yourself protected. There's nothing to protect you at all if you stand in a corner. Eventually you'd be cut to pieces. It's either you defend yourself by speaking up. How you speak up is another thing."*

One interviewee (Mary, 10 years in New Zealand, originally from Mainland China), currently an experienced administrator in an educational establishment, related incidences where she felt very awkward with embarrassment when Kiwi teachers speak negatively and disparagingly of Chinese student plagiarism in her presence at her workplace. As a new migrant, Mary felt she could not bring herself to say anything and had to use her own strategies to cope but, over the years, she found the confidence to speak up and address issues. In her account, Mary alluded to typical cultural characteristics of the Chinese people – humbleness and conflict avoidance. She had this to say, *"Before (when arrived nine-ten years ago) I didn't say anything. I just ignored, pretended I didn't hear anything but now I would speak up and voice out my feelings. For example, I'd say, 'That's not the case, I mean everyone is different. Kiwis got crazy drivers as well, not all the Asian drivers'. I can speak up now because I'm more confident now. Chinese people are quite humble and don't want to start any argument but now I just*

realise if you don't say anything, they will keep doing it (mis-treatment) to you. You've to do somethingto stop it (them). Probably because I stay here long (nine years) and am now more confident, yeah. I didn't have enough confidence to talk back, to argue or something, probably in the first three or four years."

Lucy (HR Officer, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia):
"There's a lot of culture differences there but the thing is I'm not afraid to actually speak up (my) mind, in a way it won't cause any offence to the other party and that's something we've to learn. The Asian way is to keep quiet and hope that it'd (conflict) go away. If you keep quiet, people will continue to give you crap."

Grace (Administrator, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Taiwan):
"And also I know that if I don't speak for myself, no one else will do it for me and I'll be suffering (alone). If you don't speak up, people will think you accept the situation and they don't know what you really think or that they've already offended you, they won't know that. Because in their culture they speak up when they are not happy so if you don't speak up they assume you are OK, you're fine. I think someone told me and this is quite helpful to know this." Grace added, *"It depends on the situation. I'd probably speak up for myself. I'd have more courage if I've the support from people, if they give me suggestions and then I think I'd be more confident. I think I still have a lot to learn because if something (conflict) happens to me again, I'll probably not know what to do."*

Mary (Administrator, 10 years in New Zealand, originally from Mainland China): *"You need to speak out; if you don't, people will think you don't mind and they would just take it for granted."*

Martin (working in the hospitality sector, 26 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"I think it's just a matter of standing up for yourself. If you think you're right, why do you want to take the fall for it?"*

Lucy (HR Officer, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"If you don't learn to speak up, you'll be miserable, in the sense that people will generally walk away and resign and go somewhere else and you'll face the same thing again and again. Every organisation has politics and we have to find a way to handle it, cope with it. I believe in speaking out. If there's any confrontation and if you don't speak out, then it's like a pressure cooker and you simmer and simmer while the other person may not be aware of anything (conflict) at all and you're the one who is simmering. This is very unhealthy for oneself and sometimes it is best that you speak out. Also, if you don't speak out, the perpetrator will continue doing it."*

Mary (Administrator, 10 years in New Zealand, originally from Mainland China): *"If you don't speak up, I think you'll never get...you'll never solve the problem (issue). If you don't speak up, well, they will stay the same...for instance they have this opinion of you and if you don't speak up, then it reinforces that opinion. Like for example if they think you're bad, and if you don't speak up, then they'll continue thinking that you're bad."*

Penny (Quantity Surveyor, 20 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"When I first came here, I was timid. I didn't have the confidence (to speak up). Too scared to talk (say anything). Had I remained timid, I'd feel that they (Kiwis) are trying to bully me. I'd feel that I'm overworked or not appreciated."*

Bruce (working in the service industry, 20 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore): *"If you don't speak up, I think they will...I don't like to use the word...if you don't, they will take the Mickey out of you!"*

Annie (Administrator, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"It's important, the ability to speak up as we are in a Western country. We must have the ability, know how to speak up just to let them know...doesn't mean we are dumb or we don't know how to voice our ourselves. Because you're already disadvantaged, there's always some racism around....when you go for an interview, they (Kiwi employers) will always select Kiwi people,*

because they can speak English fluently and whereas the Chinese Of course they will pick the other (Kiwi). A bit of discrimination. That sort of comes in as well."

Linny (Accountant, 7 years in New Zealand, originally from Mainland China):
" I've learned that if I'm not happy about something I really need to tell the other person because they may not know what I'm thinking. And because of the cultural differences, they may have taken it differently of what I've said."

As raised in these comments, learning to speak up appears to be a significant element in the migrants' acculturation process. Their comments show that acquiring the ability to express themselves vocally is of benefit to them personally and developmentally. At the other end of the spectrum, not speaking up and voicing their thoughts, opinions and feelings may have negative and sometimes dire consequences as shared by the following interviewees.

Jenny (Accountant, 17 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore): *"If you don't speak up, you get sooo stressed, you get so depressed and you think that you're nobody and what you do is all wrong. If you don't speak up, people don't understand what is your thinking and human nature is such that we've varied ideas, different ideas, and people should know regardless of what position you're in. Speaking up...is good for everybody and you can progress and the other can progress as well. There's no point just absorbing all the negative things that you perceive as negative and keep it all to yourself and be intimidated by that. Also, the perpetrator will keep on telling you off which is not right, he shouldn't speak to you like that. If we don't (speak up) the other party wouldn't know and then you'll resign and the company will lose a good worker."*

Barbara (Accountant, 27 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore):
"It feels that ... if you don't express it and suppress it can cause a certain degree of resentment and if you don't express your view, either you let it go if it's trivial or not important, let it go. But if it's important to you and if you don't

... speak out about it, the only person that's going to be hurt is yourself. Previously, (early days) I would have just said, 'let it go, let it go'. I already let it go too many times and there's room for you to speak up."

Candy (Bank Officer, 8 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"I guess the difference is that I've been here longer and also I'm in a better place now (compared to when I was a new immigrant). I've my own house and I guess I feel better about everything now, like I'm more confident now. I've gained this confidence through experiencing different things here (New Zealand), just going through life really."*

For some like this interviewee, developing self-confidence to speak up takes years. Barbara (Accountant, 27 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore) said, *"It takes time – over the years – to actually be confident to develop confidence to speak up and engage in dialogue with the locals."*

To some interviewees, learning to speak up is akin to learning a new skill. One such person, a migrant (Mary, Administrator, 10 years in New Zealand, originally from Mainland China) who has been here for the past ten years said, *"I'm getting better now. I would say it's gradual...like updating your own skills. For example, your job skills, your speaking skills, your language skills, your knowledge about this (Kiwi) culture. Gradually, gradually. I'm still not getting there yet but I've started to. If it's really unfair, I'll speak up."*

Interestingly, one interviewee is of the view that she has to make a conscious effort to continue 'practicing' speaking up otherwise she could easily revert to her old self. This is what she shared.

Barbara (Accountant, 27 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore): *"The position now is that I've more confidence in handling conflict and not afraid of it (speaking up and confronting conflict). Previously I would just run away from it. I've to stress that you've to keep on practising it because you can revert back to your old self. If you're unconscious about it, you can revert back to it ... to conditioning...to your early childhood (conditioning) or your*

cultural (roots). Sometimes you can subconsciously go back to it but the thing is, it's not really bad, that we respect our elders, respect authority. Yes, we've to respect elders and (people in) authority but when that authority becomes unreasonable then you've that right to question it. So I would like to stress that our childhood cultural conditioning is very strong as it's always at the back of the mind. Just be aware of that."

Again, employers play a significant role in reinforcing positive experiences for their migrant employees. Here is a migrant's experience of a manager whose verbal encouragement and behaviour are seen as reinforcing positive practices in the migrant, leading to confidence-building. Candy (Bank Officer, 8 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"I find that I do speak up more at meetings now. I feel more confident now, not 100% confident, but more confident than when I first arrived here as a new migrant. I've been encouraged to speak up. I noticed that my team leader and my manager, they actually feel happy when they see me speaking up at meetings, especially if I bring something up at the meeting. My team leader will say, 'That's very well, it's good that you speak up' and things like that."*

4.3.1 Sense of Freedom, Liberation and Empowerment

Several interviewees described a sense of freedom and liberation in their learned ability to speak up for themselves, to voice their opinions and feelings, and not to be shackled by cultural conditioning and inhibitions such as not questioning authoritative figures, for example: elders, supervisors, managers, employers, and teachers. This translates into personal growth for the migrants.

Barbara (Accountant, 27 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore): *"You feel (that) more freedom. There's a certain freedom in that, actually. There's a certain freedom and also you confront your fear ... it takes away the fear. Actually you're facing the fear, fear of people disagreeing with you,*

fear of confrontation, because there're amicable and peaceful way of solving conflict, confrontations."

Annie (Administrator, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia):
"Speaking up... I feel tougher, more stronger, I suppose. Like people won't easily bully, not as much, or step over you. They don't, not so easily. If you don't speak up I suffer myself then because nobody knows what happened. If I don't speak up, they probably manipulate you more like if I am too nice (and) say yes, yes, yes. I feel that they (Kiwis) use you more. I feel this at (my) work."

Alicia (Manager, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"It's made me suddenly realise, hmmm, if I have a doubt about something I actually have the right to say something. It was quite empowering for myself but the thing is it didn't come suddenly (speaking up, being assertive), it graaaduuuaally....came, definitely over the years. On a continuum from 1 to 10, I guess I started at 1 (about six years ago). I'm still on 6 or 7 and I'd like to get past 7. I'm progressing along the way."*

Linny (Accountant, 7 years in New Zealand, originally from Mainland China):
"I realise that they (Kiwis) do talk about things you know ...openly. People just talk to each other, like there's no hiding. In China, if you don't like a person then you still have to pretend that you like the person. It just feels so hard but here it's like speak out, freedom, you just feel really comfortable, more comfortable shall I say, to talk to another person and you don't like something you can actually tell them. In exactly the same way you don't like something your boss is understanding, that's why I really like about it. In China they don't care – that's my way and I want it my way and you've to follow! And you've to follow but here (New Zealand) it's not. The boss and employees can have meetings together and address issues. Boss says, 'Oh what else I can help you?'. You feel so comfortable, having a boss like that ... I feel like the boss is at the same level as me, being approachable, being very nice."

4.3.2 Building Self-Confidence in a New Land

So, how do migrants overcome personal inhibitions, their cultural conditioning and boundaries and start building self-confidence? Some interviewees shared some revealing thoughts and experiences. The following excerpts suggest that for migrants, confidence comes from English Language proficiency, and familiarisation of the dominant culture, personal and professional development in New Zealand.

Mary (Administrator, 10 years in New Zealand, originally from Mainland China): *“First, I think language skill. Second, you become familiar with the (Kiwi) culture.”*

Felicia (Accountant, 14 years in New Zealand, originally from Indonesia): *“They used to make fun of me, of my accent. Over time, I learnt that there’re many types of people. Working in a café bar and restaurant was really good for me. I learnt a lot. I learned how to deal with people. I learned how people deal with one another. It’s interesting working in a restaurant as while working, you can still observe people, how they behave with one another. That added to my experience. By watching and observing, I actually learned and with built-up knowledge, it’s built my confidence back and am able to do what I believe I can do. I’m not scared (any more). (With the passage of time), I feel that I’m now older, much older than when I first started working in the bar/restaurant as a student. I’ve got more responsibilities and I’ve got full authority for myself (now in a professional job).”*

Felicia added, *“I’m (now) no longer shy in giving ideas, new things, new approach to certain or any aspect of my work. I was shy before. In the early days in New Zealand, even if I have an idea and I think it’ll work, I wouldn’t even DARE mention it, just in case it failed. It doesn’t come out right or I haven’t had the good foresight to see how it happened but now I just speak my mind and see if it works. If it doesn’t, it doesn’t matter.”*

Jenny (Accountant, 17 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore):
"..no, wouldn't do it (speak up, voice out) in the first few years because mainly at that time I'd value my job more than trying to be clever with my boss and (risk) losing my job. It's self-protection, survival. But after staying here for 15 years and I now feel that I'm employable, I mean I can go and look for a job any time. That's how I feel."

Annie (Administrator, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia):
"...(over the years)..when I change jobs, I sort of slowly build my confidence and now I'm more experienced. I already know how to do this and that and that's how I gained my confidence."

Jenny (Accountant, 17 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore):
"...(over the years and changing jobs) and now I've a lot of confidence. I've picked up a lot of experience and in terms of New Zealand, knowing financial things, reporting and all their requirements by the government, I'm totally outspoken in the sense that I know that I know my work much, much better. I feel that I'm contributing a lot to my present job (with my years of experience) as my boss is from the UK and I can point out to him certain things like GST and tax issues and he appreciates me."

Jenny added: *"I think it's quite gradual, in the sense that..the first time when you say something in front of your boss, I can always remember that first time, and when I come back home I felt so nervous and I said (to my husband), 'I'm going to lose my job tomorrow. I'd better find another job'. But then nothing happened and everything was fine. After a while you got another conflict and you are a little bolder, not bolder just speak your opinion and you get a bit more confident and gradually you become more confident, yeah. The people here don't put you down like in the Asian (Chinese) culture because once you do something wrong, they'll keep harping on it, but down here (New Zealand) they laugh and then they forget about it. So you become ...more...daring in a way to speak out and give your ideas. So there's a change in you as well. I think if I were to go back to Singapore now, I won't be able to work there. I'm no longer a listener! I can't*

sit down and listen anymore. I mean I'd be giving all sorts of ideas and ways to do things, really."

Several interviewees developed more confidence from learning about human and individual rights as employees. These were picked up mostly through observations, general knowledge, media, knowledge of New Zealand legislations concerning employment and employee rights, and personal development training. Their reflections reveal positive personal developmental and cognitive changes in themselves. Here are some excerpts:

Barbara (Accountant, 27 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore): *"In my early days as a new immigrant, I'd just take it and not say anything in the face of any type of interpersonal conflict. Nowadays, it's different. I'm aware of New Zealand rules and regulations and my rights and if someone is doing something within my work environment that would endanger my health, I would have no hesitation to speak up and request the person to stop. The culture here is you've a right, there's a very strong element of human rights and that's affecting my health (re smoking). You pick things up like this. The Kiwi culture encourages speaking up and that's a very positive thing to have, to speak up, to speak up for yourself. And also a culture, I learned, that takes ownership for one's own feelings. I take ownership of it and that is why I like the Kiwi culture where they encourage you to speak up, encourage you to own your own viewpoints. The Asian way is more like you don't question authority, full stop."*

Paul (Security Officer, originally from Malaysia): *"Through my experience in New Zealand – I've spent 20 years in New Zealand now – I realise that I have my rights now. I know my rights as an employee and I use it when I can and to defend myself against conflicts which are against me, which might not be true. I'll defend myself. I learned to be cautious with people; through experience, you can pick up who will create problems and you try to avoid these people, have less dealings with them. My aim is to be in a happy working relationship as far as possible but you do have conflicts. Through my*

experience, I learned to minimise it as much as I can. The most important thing is that they got to accept your culture. If they don't accept you, it's where the problem starts. So you have to work in a Kiwi culture now. Kiwis don't accept your culture sometimes and this may lead to conflicts so you have to learn to work in the Kiwi culture (way) as far as possible, because you are in Rome (Do as the Romans Do). In time, you become more experienced in dealing with/managing conflict in the future."

In addition, Paul had this to share, "My perception is that in general, companies (in New Zealand) take advantage of employees, especially people like me with a foreign background, a Chinese background. (I feel) that they always think that because of our colour, they can take advantage. But over the years, I've learned about my rights as an employee. I (have) spoken out and they realise that I know my rights and so they are more cautious about taking advantage."

Robert (Administrator, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): "I learned about my rights. I'm involved in various activities and committees and learned about various rights as an employee and how to look after oneself."

Paul (Security Officer, 20 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): "In my second job in New Zealand, I learned a lot from that organisation. I also had a lot of training in conflict management, managing people, managing sales and personal training, motivation, so you learn through all these programmes and as a result, you pick up a lot of things you didn't know about. You also picked up employers' rights, and employees' rights. In terms of conflicts, you learned what are your rights as an employee."

4.4 Ancillary Factors which Accelerated Migrant's Acculturation

A number of ancillary themes emerged from the interviews. These are factors which assisted, or in some cases like intercultural marriage or relationships,

hasten the acculturation process. To illustrate, here are some comments from interviewees:

Barbara (Accountant, 27 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore):
“The other thing I’d like to mention also is intercultural marriage. I’m married to a Kiwi and his family’s very accepting (of me) and that’s another factor there. It’s a factor because you not only married your husband you married the family as well. You interact with the family and you participate with family activities – birthdays of nephews, nieces on husband’s side, husband’s sister, brother-in-law, in-laws. All these have a positive impact on it (assimilation) and actually that helps to actually bridge the gap between cultures. Yes, I’m fortunate to marry into a family who is very open, open-minded, open to other races and acceptance as well. It’s a family that respect other cultures – same wavelength as me – my acceptance of Kiwi culture. This too has a definite (positive) impact on my assimilation into New Zealand culture.”

According to Sharp (1995), cultural mixing can and does occur with or without intermarriage. Sharp notes that, “although the autonomy and incommensurability of cultures is asserted often enough, cultures are actually leaky vessels, created, renewed and transformed in endless contact with others” (p. 118). While this contact with others can occur in many ways, intermarriage is unique in that it provides a particularly intense and intimate site for potential cultural exchange (Callister, 2004b). Although it is often considered that the acculturation will ultimately be assimilation to the dominant culture, intermarriage research has shown that intermarriage often has complex outcomes in terms of cultural sharing and ethnic identity (Callister, Didham, & Potter, 2005).

Migrants’ employers may play a role, albeit unsuspectingly, via their organisation’s staff development policies, which helps to accelerate migrants’ acculturation process as related by an interviewee. Reflecting on her gradual changes and personal development, Barbara (Accountant, 27 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore) felt that her assimilation into the New Zealand society was aided by training opportunities she received from her

employers. Barbara said, *“I’ve had opportunities to attend courses and seminars along the way, and learned how to deal with various situations like conflicts and managing effective relationships, how to handle conflicts. They (employers) do stress that part of the development (personal) rather than focused on just getting the job done. My employers are more interested in developing you as a whole, on staff’s emotional intelligence. I found this has helped me to articulate my points and feelings and I bring these into my work environment.”*

4.5 Migrants’ Perceived Barriers to Acculturation

A few interviewees feel that however hard they try, some aspects are just too difficult for them to adopt – socially and culturally – in order to fully assimilate into their adopted country New Zealand. Here is what they shared:

Jenny (Accountant, 17 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore): *“The only thing I’m uncomfortable about is going out socially ...drinking with colleagues. I don’t know how to be, sort of, intimate or close to them...I feel there’s a sort of cultural difference. So that’s still a barrier in a way socially but work-wise I’d say it has become quite a minimal issue as I’ve learned to handle any situation.”*

Mary (Administrator, 10 years in New Zealand, originally from Mainland China): *“There’ll always be a difference because of our different culture...because of who we are (Chinese) that you can’t really fully assimilate and deal with interpersonal conflict at their (Kiwi) level. You can’t be exactly the same as the Kiwis, (in terms of) solving a conflict.”*

4.6 Caught Between Two Worlds: Acculturation Drawbacks

Settling into their adopted country, making conscious attempts to assimilate and acculturate into the new environment by jumping through hoops and making personal changes in an attempt to fit into the host society, migrants

may also experience hurdles of an entirely different kind. This is poignantly told by a migrant who decided to move his young family to New Zealand for his career prospects, for a better life for him and his family. Here is what he shared with the researcher.

Warren (Manager, 5 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"Putting aside my cultural background, being Asian and Malaysian, it's not something easy (for me) because first thing, my parents noticed changes in me. They said (to me) you're too Westernised. They said it's not good but then they would not see my situation because I see that for my own survival (need to change and adapt) especially in a foreign country. You have to throw those traditional or probably cultural norms away. I say this to my family, my children. When it comes to the working environment, just that put that aside (culture) because you know, they say when you are in Rome do what the Romans do. That's how I can get into a situation where I'm comfortable with conflict and deal with it and I don't find myself being submissive to my boss."*

Chan (2005) finds that migrants face adjustment problems which stem from reinforcing their own cultural identity and at the same time adopting elements of the culture of the host society. Chan says that migrants may emphasise 'culture-building' activities that may possibly cause social isolation and separation from the mainstream society, or they may model their conduct on a dominant group for the purpose of upward social mobility, which necessitates integration and joining the majority group. The inherent paradox in such dualism may well be the breeding ground for inner conflict, within both migrant groups and individuals (Chan, 2005). This is indeed the case as depicted in the candid reflections of the above interviewee. In essence, this interviewee finds himself caught between two worlds. This finds congruence with the observations from Chan (2005) who says that migrants live within and between two cultures, striving to integrate with the country of resettlement, even while maintaining an affiliation with, or loyalty to the home country (Chan, 2005).

A further account by Martin tells of his first impressions of what he perceives to be an egalitarian society. Martin remembers, *"..and they don't pull ranks as much. They are more egalitarian, that's how I feel (and observed), whereas in Asia it's more hierarchical where I'm the boss and you're just the employee, subordinate."* This had a huge impression as well as a profound impact on Martin as he went on to say, *"....whereas in New Zealand as I've seen, see in New Zealand even when I worked for a big organisation as a summer job as a office cleaner, I observed the head of department and all the big bosses, they'd be in the same cafeteria and we would be in our dirty overalls and they'd be sitting next to us and they'd say, 'Hi, how are you?', and I thought, 'Oh my god, that's wonderful!' No hierarchy, that's wonderful, not like 'Oh gee, who are you, that kind of thing.' And then, at the end-of-year function, they would come and approach you and talk to you even though you're just a cleaner."*

Cultural roots are still strong even for those interviewed who migrated to New Zealand at a very young age. Andrew (Bank Manager, originally from Vietnam), whose family migrated to New Zealand 18 years ago and who was integrated into the New Zealand culture from primary school days said, *"Probably (because) I'm Chinese..maybe we don't like to confront anyone, because I think when we see someone more elderly than us, it's just automatic respect that they're older and wiser. My mum and dad taught us children to respect the elderly. There's definitely no doubt about that respect but sometimes when it comes to the workforce, it's different."*

The above account illustrates that respect for authority (such as bosses, elders, and teachers) causes a Chinese to avoid confrontations, conflicts. Interestingly, one gains more respect in New Zealand, when you do speak up and confront people or issues. Here's an account by a different interviewee (Robert) who said, *"The more you speak up, the more people respect you in New Zealand. Conversely if you don't speak up, they attack you. They don't have respect for you. It's the respect that's important. Speak up and you gain more respect here (New Zealand)."*

However, yet another interviewee, Warren (Manager), a more recent migrant who arrived in 2002, is convinced that from his observations at his workplace it is quite the opposite, so much so that he has accepted that as the cultural norm in his host country. This is Warren's account, *"I noticed that the people here are....especially the New Zealanders....they don't really respect their bosses. They can (tell) their boss to go somewhere else. I've seen that and I believe that if the managers can accept what the staff tell them, then I guess this is the norm here. It's not the norm in Malaysia where even the expatriate bosses expect the Asians to respect their bosses but not here. So I find that if people are doing that here this must be the cultural norm."*

Martin, who emigrated to New Zealand more than 25 years ago from Malaysia and now works in the hospitality industry, says he 'thinks in a Kiwi way'. Martin has the following interesting account to share. In commenting on an existing conflict situation with a business partner, Martin said, *"My thinking is all Kiwi way. It's hard to generalise but my business partner is like the typical people from China because they may think that you're the big boss and everybody got to kow-tow to you."* Martin's account shows how far he has come along in the acculturation process.

It would appear that the interviewees' reference to their Chinese cultural roots of which respecting parents, elders, teachers and other authoritative figures is unquestioningly accepted, a migrant who has been in New Zealand for more than 25 years disagreed. At the interview Martin said, *"I feel that respect for people is so important. It doesn't matter who they are, you just respect them. I feel that's the Kiwi way, that's the Western way, as opposed to the Chinese way that because of their affluence or whatever, they tend to look down on the lower caste. I told my business partner that it doesn't work that way, not here in New Zealand. I said to my business partner, 'You're in New Zealand, you're in a Western country. You're not in China you know.'"*

Interestingly, the British influence has a lingering effect on some on of the people of Malaysia (previously Malaya) and Singapore. Both countries were former British colonies and under British rule. Malaya gained its

independence from Britain in August 1957 while Singapore gained hers in August 1963. Here is an account that illustrates how the colonial times had an impact on an interviewee (Bruce) for a while when he first arrived in New Zealand, and it was not until a number of years later that his perception changed.

Bruce (in the service industry, 20 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore): *“I think the respecting authority comes from the Asian background. Singapore was a British colony. For some reason I grew up thinking that the white men are always the masters and it’s true in those days the white men always hold the good jobs, they got special. .. in Singapore they got special clubs and associations for them. They were exclusive clubs and all these and then you could see their wives enjoying afternoon teas and having all this (good) time and so you get that perception that they are always superior*

Bruce added: *“However, that’s no longer my perception. It took me a while, probably about the first ten years here (in New Zealand). I’ve mingled with them (Caucasians) and you soon realise that they are just like you and me. It’s just that we’ve different hair colour, skin colour. And I think they don’t want us to look at them as different too.”*

Barbara (Accountant, 27 years in New Zealand): *“I came from Singapore so we are supposed to be always respectful for the boss, don’t talk back and do everything they ask you to do so with that kind of background, I normally would just keep quiet.”*

The following excerpt is an interesting account related by an interviewee, from her perspective as a parent. Jenny’s family emigrated to New Zealand 17 years ago. It is interesting because her story gives a glimpse into some internal personal struggles for migrants who have adopted the thinking and behaviour of the dominant culture of their host country after overcoming initial hurdles. This account came about when the interviewee talked about respecting teachers, explaining her perception of the cultural differences

between the Chinese and locals (Kiwis). As her story shows, it is a double-edged sword for her son.

Jenny (Accountant, 17 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore): *"Well we came when our son was 14. And, oh I can always remember the first three months he was in Auckland Grammar, the best school in Auckland at that time. He couldn't believe what, how the students treated the teachers and he said he wanted to change to another school. He said when the teacher turned his back, the students started to talk and throw papers at him. He couldn't take it. He said, "What school is this?!" Terrible school, he said. No respect for the teachers at all, students made faces behind the teacher's back!"*

Jenny went on to describe the changes in her son, saying, *"Definitely! There was a big change in our son because he was brought up here from when he was a teenager. He learned a lot here (about New Zealand) in the first five or six years. It (change) was very significant when he went back to the army in Singapore (compulsory Army Service). After graduating from University here, he went back to the army for two and a half years, three years in Singapore and at first he tried to sort of confront the officer in charge. He was always punished and he said that he didn't know why. He said that he couldn't understand why the commanding officer was so unfair and so cruel, and never listened to reasons. My son was always trying to stand up for his mates and he (ended up) always getting punished."*

From the above findings and discussions derived from the personal accounts of the 25 migrants interviewed, this study has illustrated the complexities, challenges and even ironies that migrants face while undergoing the acculturation process in New Zealand. More importantly, this study gives an insight into how migrants adapt and cope with their new environment and the learning derived from their acculturation process. How well they adapt as migrants is related to various factors, including individual personality and the choices they make.

The findings' main themes together with exemplifying extracts from the interviews are encapsulated in a table (see Appendix E).

4.7 Summary

In the main, the migrants interviewed feel that the length of stay is definitely a major factor in acculturation. The longer they are in New Zealand, the more opportunities for exposure and observations there are for them to learn and pick up how Kiwis interact at work and deal with interpersonal conflict.

However, the length of time on its own is not enough as was evident in the experiences of some of the interviewees. Some interviewees believe that discarding traditional shackles and personal and cultural norms are more important if one wishes to assimilate into the New Zealand society. This calls for conscious and active changes in thinking, attitude and behaviour. Receiving encouraging words from employers, receiving organisational support for personal self-development training including conflict resolutions, the perception of being accepted by the host society, all translate to increase in self-confidence. The findings show that the ability for migrants to speak up for themselves stems from increased self-confidence. For many, this is a long and gradual journey of acculturation, one that is enriching, marked by self-recognition of personal advancement and change. In the main, all interviewees recognised the need to fit into their host society. The interviewees' reflections of their acculturation experiences in New Zealand are encapsulated below in these representative comments:

Martin (in the hospitality industry, originally from Malaysia): *"When I first came to New Zealand some 25 years ago, you tend not to say anything, not speak your mind. You just do what you agreed to do, just get the job done but gradually, as time passes on you find that you need to speak up sometimes, say what needs to be said to get the things done. I think most of the time it's worked well for me when I've a (conflict) situation and so definitely over time, definitely over time, has helped me to progress in my*

workplace. At the same time, the respect for the elders, probably has helped me as well, I mean respecting authority, elders' authority. For me, every day is an experience, everything including conflict handling, still learning. It's a learning curve for me and I'll continue improving."

Barbara (Accountant, 27 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore):
"My reflection of this (as a migrant) is a good journey. It's actually an enriching journey, a personal development process that actually (provided me with) very valuable experience throughout the years and I take it as a learning experience."

Throughout the findings, there were common threads, such as the realisation that as migrants, they have to change and adopt the ways of the people of the dominant culture in their new environment, however strange or alien it may be. Further, the findings indicate that although they share the same ethnicity and cultural backgrounds, each migrant's experience of his/her acculturation process is unique as they are all individually exposed to different environments and situations. Assisted by previous contact with different cultures, some migrants acculturate at a faster rate than others. Overall, the findings point to a realisation by these ethnic migrant Chinese that they need to make necessary changes to their social and behavioural make up in order to integrate and align themselves with the people of the dominant culture in the host society that is New Zealand. These shifts are with constraints however, changes in as much as their personality and attitude and allegiance to cultural roots permit.

The findings also reveal that for some migrants, their journey was made more difficult by negative experiences from intercultural interactions manifested in conflicts and misunderstandings in intercultural interactions. Their response mechanism was to adopt the ways of the dominant group in the host society, in particular, to be assertive. The cultural orientations of the ethnic migrant Chinese are such that for many, this concept has to be adopted, learned and put into practice in their new environment. Their growth, along with renewed self confidence derived from observing, interacting and practising the ways of

the local New Zealand culture, are shown to be assisted by the length of residence in the country. This is evident in the migrants' accounts as they relate their different experiences of interpersonal conflict in their workplace, from the early episodes as new migrants, to how they changed and modelled after the local culture in their handling of interpersonal conflicts that the length of residence helps. However, it is not the length of residence per se. It is because the longer the migrant is in New Zealand, the more opportunities there are for growth and learning, observing and practising, interacting and understanding the cultural norms in their host society.

As summed up by Penny (Quantity Surveyor, 20 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia), *"I'd like to add something. As migrants, we should try to pick up the good points, the good habits of that country and not try to force your culture onto them (host country), because we came here because we want to live with their way and we should respect that and not try to change it. The good habits that I picked up in the workplace or my living environment is to be open. I think the people here (New Zealand) are more receptive, in a way, to your ideas. They do listen to your comments...maybe I've good bosses, they try to accommodate what I need."*

From the data analysis of the interviews, it can be inferred that all of the 25 ethnic minority migrant Chinese acculturative experiences were individually unique as they journeyed through the process of growth. Migrants' personal disposition, their previous exposure to other cultures, host language proficiency, and opportunities to observe, absorb and learn in their new environment are unique to each of them. The findings show the acculturation process can be made more difficult for migrants who have negative workplace encounters. It is quite clear from this study that all the interviewees went through a growth process, a period where changes in their thinking and behaviour occur. From the interviewees' accounts, these appear to be the most rapid in the first few years, although there are a number who insist that they are still learning and growing. In short, the acculturation process was basically a period of personal growth, changes and adjustments over time.

CHAPTER FIVE: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher reflects on her own experiences on her acculturation process as an ethnic migrant Chinese in New Zealand. Since it is a record of her personal reflections, it is written in the first person. It is hoped that the inclusion of this reflective piece detailed in sub-section 5.2 Personal Reflections, will add a few different aspects to this study or another migrant's view, to enhance its richness.

The researcher also thought it beneficial to retrace her experiences of the last two years, from the start of this study. The very act of reflecting generated a number of ideas, some of which have been identified as limitations of this study. These are encapsulated in sub-section 5.3 Limitations. The limitations of this study naturally lead on to recommendations, thus the chapter ends with sub-section 5.4 Recommendations in which a few ideas for future research are offered.

5.2 Personal Reflections

This study has enriched me in many ways. It has afforded me a much deeper understanding and appreciation of other migrants' valiant efforts to adapt and adjust to their new environment, at times with personal costs. Their courage and dignity are heartening and also fortifying. It has also expanded my knowledge and appreciation, in depth and breadth, of the struggles of some migrants as they make courageous attempts to make adaptive changes. Conducting this study has personal meaning and significance for me. I have learned more about my Chinese cultural origins and traditions from reviewing the abundance of scholarly literature, and the findings from interview data

collected. From a platform of conditioning and blind acceptance of my Chinese custom, family and ancestral rituals or habits, to become an informed person at a higher intellectual level is very exciting for me. In this regard, I shall start retracing my key life history in the following paragraphs.

Originally from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, I arrived in Auckland in October 1987 to commence immediate employment with an international consulting engineering firm where I stayed for a decade. Two decades later, I am a proud citizen of New Zealand, married to a Kiwi and hold a responsible management position in the youngest University in New Zealand, AUT University.

As a descendant from the early Chinese who left China in search of a better life in Malaya (now Malaysia) over a century ago, I spent my formative years in Malaysia before migrating to New Zealand. Growing up and receiving primary and secondary education in post colonial Malaysia, I was conditioned to absorb, without question, my family's cultural traditions and accepted whatever the teachers said as gospel. My cultural roots dictate filial piety and unconditional respect for parents and older relatives and people in authority such as supervisors, managers, and employers. From this background, teachers are revered and respected, their teaching unchallenged, even if it didn't make sense to students. Learning is by rote. Family upbringing and educational traditions in Malaysia, a multi-cultural nation, upheld the sanctity of obedience, social cohesion and co-existence.

Interactions with members of Malaysia's multi-ethnic society from a very young age enabled me to learn and appreciate the differences in the cultures and customs of other ethnicities – the Malays (indigenous people of Malaysia), Indians, Pakistanis and Eurasians. My cultural roots are entrenched, hence my mentioning that I absorbed it without question. From my vantage point now, I find it interesting that it never occurred to me to be more inquisitive, to ask "Why?" Why do we do what we do? What is the origin of a particular ritual? Conditioning is a very powerful concept. Conditioned to accept things without question, I found it extremely difficult to

critique something. I remember floundering in an undergraduate paper which was designed to teach students how to critique the work of others. It was made more complex because I had to critique a scholar's study. How dare I critique an established author's publication? Conditioned by years of rote learning, I automatically accepted whatever the author wrote.

Conducting this study has made me realise that the cultural traditions I have upheld and in many instances continue to do so to this day, I do so without understanding why. I did it because it is tradition, it's been done for as long as anyone in my family can remember. Some cultural practices are so entrenched that it requires an automatic response, done unconsciously. Thus, to me the work of Bar-Yosef (1968) and Eisenstadt (1954) about deculturation, that is unlearning some of the migrant's childhood cultural patterns and other long-held beliefs and behaviours, stands up to scrutiny. What I find myself questioning though, is the claim that deculturation, according to Barna (1983), Dyal & Dyal (1981), Kim (1988) and Moos (1976), is a stressful and anxiety-laden process. Their assertion that these produce temporary psychic disturbance and even "breakdown" has to be put into context because not every migrant experiences this.

From my perspective, and this is my experience and thus unique to me, the move to New Zealand was embraced fully with great excitement. I thrived on the foreignness, some may describe it as strangeness. I like the people, the culture, customs, food, and dress. I like living here. I find the country most beautiful. To me, it is an easy country to live in. I threw myself into all sorts of activities soon after I arrived from Malaysia, joining my office colleagues and learning how to play touch rugby, cricket, and understand a rugby game (these games are as foreign as can be to a Chinese). The only thing I can't do, though I tried, is to imbibe alcoholic beverages, not because of religious or cultural reasons but because, simply, I can't. My body cannot handle alcohol.

Living in a multi-cultural society such as Malaysia and attending an English medium school from the first day of my formal education stood me in good

stead. Long used to different cultures and attaining a certain proficiency in the English language, I did not encounter any obstacles interacting with New Zealanders. Whatever adjustments and changes I made, I did them from a practical standpoint. On reflection, many of the changes were made unconsciously while others were conscious choices. A good example is my resolve to learn how to deal with conflicts the way that is commonly done in the New Zealand workplace.

It has to be said, however, that although I consider myself proficient in the English language, some of my expressions and choice of words were different, even unusual. An ex colleague described it as “quaint”. The other aspect is that fluency in the English language was only achieved over the years. Most remarkably is my realisation that I did not have to translate from Chinese into English before I said something or replied to someone. I realised that my fluency was attained when I started dreaming in English, even when I was talking to members of my family (who are in Malaysia) in my dreams, some of whom do not speak English. As that was significant to me, I remember it very well – it was when I was in my fifth year in New Zealand.

Although I have taken for granted my ability to converse in English, this study of ethnic migrant Chinese where English is recently and sometimes hastily acquired, has made me realise how important the proficiency in the dominant language of the host society is for migrants. It impacts on and across all strata of society. Having the ability to converse and understand each other in a common language is an important aspect of effective social interactions, promoting understanding, while at the same time minimising misunderstandings and conflicts. At an organisation level, misunderstandings and conflicts arising from intercultural conflicts resulting from miscommunication are detrimental to the smooth operation of a business. Productivity may suffer. The downtime and time spent in resolving the conflict can be very costly to the organisation.

As I have mentioned already, I made some conscious changes to be responsive to my new environment. From my observations of some of my

work colleagues, they have no qualms about raising objections or voicing their views and opinions. What I noticed also is that they may disagree with each other or with their bosses, sometimes heatedly, but no obvious animosity is detected. I noticed that after the altercation, the parties were still able to chat with each other and appear to be cordial. All this was alien and fascinating (sometimes bewildering) to me, especially in my early days as a new migrant. I wanted to be like them, to emulate them and be able to disagree with someone without the fear of wounding, hurting, or damaging the relationship irrevocably. I was fascinated at the ease of tertiary students in their interactions with lecturers. I was amazed that the lecturers were not affronted when challenged by students. If anything, I nursed a suspicion that some lecturers actually like the temerity of the students. I was equally amazed that this is the same in the various workplaces that I have been in over the last 20 years. My observations led me to believe that having the ability and courage to speak up are of advantage to a person and the person could well be respected for them.

Thus, I learned to speak up and again, this was a conscious choice. It was because I wanted to. However, it did not happen overnight, but little by little and with intentional practice, I feel that speaking up is not such a frightening experience after all. Having the courage to speak up represents another aspect of my personal growth borne out of the acculturation process. As speaking up and voicing opinions, especially in the presence of authoritative figures, is not a conditioned response for me and had to be learned, I had to beware of “regressing” to my cultural conditioning where speaking up, talking back and publicly disagreeing with people of authority, is considered disrespectful, disapproved and heavily frowned upon.

In terms of the interview process, the largely unstructured nature was effective in that it allowed the interviewee to have free rein to describe his/her experiences in their adopted country. On the flip side of this is that a number of interviewees got side-tracked. This meant that I had to rein them in but found myself having to do it with diplomacy. At times, I found myself being

carried away with the story and had to make a conscious effort to focus myself in the task in hand too.

There is another aspect which I wish to raise. I found myself affected by the sad recounts of a few interviewees so much so that I had to be careful that I did not voice my thoughts in sympathy and in indignation. I managed this with some success, telling myself that empathising with them is necessary and good for the person.

Lastly, reflecting on my whole experience while conducting this study, I have this to say. As a fellow human being, I acknowledge that I too have preconceptions which are influenced by my own life experiences, family cultural traditions, educational background and exposure to other people within my realm of social contacts. We are largely creatures of habit and find comfort in the things that we know and understand. Although personal traits feature highly in terms of a person's capacity for changes or dealing with unfamiliar environments, it is safe to say that generally human beings don't like change. We, as a species, thrive on consistency, regularity, routine, and familiarity. Thus, it is not unnatural to feel unease or even suspicion when we come across behaviour, customs and practices that are totally foreign to ours. While some people may be more open and accepting and find the differences interesting, perhaps even fascinating, others may feel uncomfortable with the strangeness.

The point here is that in a society such as ours in New Zealand, which is leaning more and more towards multiculturalism, we ought to strive to understand more of other cultures which are different from our own. Through scholastic inquiries such as this study, we will gain a higher domain in the understanding. In this, I feel that I have contributed something to academia, and I feel immensely proud.

5.3 Limitations

A number of limitations have been identified and discussed in this chapter. One, since the study is essentially a cross-cultural investigation into ethnic minority migrant Chinese's individual experiences of their acculturation process in New Zealand, the best approach to collecting primary data to meet its aims is through self-report measures. Hence, to preserve the integrity of the research findings, this study has to rely on self-report responses of 15 female and 10 male participants during one-on-one interviews with the researcher. Self-reporting has a number of drawbacks. First, it relies heavily on the interviewee's competency in describing his/her experiences, thoughts and ideas in English. Even those for whom English is their native tongue, this may not be easy as not everyone is endowed with the gift of articulation, let alone the interview participants who had to learn English as a second language.

Two, even if non-native English speakers are fluent in English as a second language and are able to articulate their ideas and thoughts well, there will always be some differences or omissions in how ideas are articulated in a particular language and in the cultural context. An example is the choice of words which is limited by the extent of the person's vocabulary, or expressions. This is neatly encapsulated in the following paragraph.

In a report on migrant settlement commissioned by the New Zealand Immigration Service, Fletcher (1999) writes that in a chiefly monolingual society such as New Zealand's, proficiency in the dominant English language is an important factor for nearly all migrants. For many migrants, the lack of proficiency in the English language is a source of distress and frustration, as revealed in a study conducted in New Zealand where Korean, Taiwanese and Hong Kong migrants were interviewed (Lidgard et al., 1998, cited in Fletcher, 1999).

Three, as this study also utilised a recalled conflict situation or situations, the retrospective nature is a limitation. This is because for those interviewees who have been in New Zealand a substantial amount of time, their recollections of the incidents may be compromised by the passage of time. On the one hand it may assume more dramatic proportions than it actually was. On the other hand, however, it is more likely that the passage of time may dilute the intensity or aggravation of the conflict that actually occurred as it is a natural defensive mechanism in humans to forget or tone down unpleasant experiences.

Four, on the flip side of the coin, as explicitly detailed in the vast amounts of literature on face and facework found in Chapter Two, the protection of others and one's face may motivate the interviewees to minimise their acculturative and conflict experiences. It may be that admitting to interpersonal conflict encounters with work colleagues could be interpreted that the interviewee is not liked or accepted by them. As acceptance by the dominant culture is what most migrants ultimately strive for, he/she may not wish to be seen as unpopular because of some shortcomings or defect in their personality or person.

Consequently, the fifth and sixth limitations are identified. The findings relied on the interviewee's ability to recall the incident, the courage to be candid as well as to lose their cultural inhibitions. Also, the findings relate to the perception of a past event and may not be actually what happened in the actual conflict situation. However, the use of a recalled situation has certain strengths in addition to these weaknesses. Specifically, when a person recalls a conflict experience whether it happened recently or a decade ago, he or she is more than likely to have spent some time trying to make sense of the interaction. During this sense making, they would understand their concerns and how they reacted as a result of these concerns.

Lastly, this study uses interpretive methodology where data is descriptive (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Interpreting the data requires a person's experience and skills, and this of course varies from person to person. Where

this study is concerned, even with the help of Nvivo7 which made coding, sorting, retrieving and other wordprocessing functions easier and faster, it still boils down to the skills and experience of the researcher. Moreover, the interpretation of the data requires the researcher to have the ability to be unbiased and objective, lest the data be coloured by her own judgement, worldview, perceptions and emotions. Some subjectivity may be present, as according to Malterud (2001), the researcher usually enters a field of research with certain opinions or preconceptions. However, Malterud went on to assert that preconceptions are not the same as bias.

5.4 Recommendations for Further Research

It may be of interest to academia to extend this study to include migrants of other ethnicities, such as the Indian immigrants in New Zealand. This will add academic rigour to existing literature as well as this study on the acculturative processes of migrants. Following on from this, another recommendation is to look at the acculturation experiences of either ethnic minority Chinese or Indians, or both, in other migrant-receiving countries such as Australia. A comparison of their experiences, including conflict behavioural responses within the same study might reveal very interesting insights into whether or not there are similarities or differences.

Another recommendation is to further enhance academic learning on the migrants' acculturative process by investigating the role of intercultural training programmes and other related initiatives. As Shimoni & Bergmann's recent study (2006) reveals, universities (Yale, Harvard) recognising the significance and importance of these training programmes are offering MBA cross-cultural studies which adopted the multi-cultural perspective to train students, future trainers, consultants, and managers in recognising organisations as culturally diverse and multiple. According to Shimoni & Bergmann (2006), these programmes also acknowledge the dynamics of cultural change, training participants to identify and respect cultural differences and then to introduce communication channels amongst people

from different cultural backgrounds. Participants' understanding of the cultural differences would allow them to go beyond their own personal cultural traditions and improve cultural understanding and thus enable successful intercultural communication (Shimoni & Bergmann, 2006). This is congruent with Graen's work. Graen (2006) talks about bridging cultural differences by building genuine mutual trust, respect, and commitment for the cultural parties involved.

Putting this into context, while Shimoni & Bergmann's and Graen's studies were recent, there was an earlier study by Dahlen (1997). Even back then, Dahlen's study talks about training programmes to foster intercultural relationships. Dahlen states that in an attempt to foster awareness of cultural diversities, corporations and consultant agencies have translated multiculturalism into intercultural training programs, where participants are taught as well as encouraged to adopt techniques such as listening with empathy, cultural conflict management, to demonstrate awareness of one's own culture as well as that of others, to exercise intercultural sensitivity, and to learn non-verbal language skills.

Additionally, to further enhance academic learning on migrants acculturation process in the host society, it is also recommended that this study be extended to inquire into the impact/influence on migrants' personal life outside their work environment – family, social interactions – from behavioural, cultural and cognitive perspectives.

The last recommendation is related to the one given above. This recommendation, however, is to research into the ironies where successful acculturation in the host country brings migrants "reverse" challenges and tensions in their interactions with members of their own family and social networks who are not migrants, or who have difficulty acculturating. Inherent in this shall be an inquiry into migrants' personal struggles. This is prompted by two accounts by different interviewees (Warren and Jenny). Warren who is originally from Malaysia migrated to New Zealand five years ago with his young family, leaving behind elderly parents, his siblings and friends. Warren

recounted the difficulty he experienced with his father who thought his son has become “too westernised”. The other account was shared by Jenny. Jenny, her husband and their young son migrated to New Zealand 17 years ago. From Jenny’s account, her son’s formative years were spent residing in New Zealand, and having acculturated and used to the ways of the New Zealand culture of free speech, found himself enduring cultural clashes when he returned to Singapore to serve the compulsory Army Service.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

As Butcher (2007) says, migration in the 21st Century is circular. Globalisation, efficient and cheaper international travel, the increased flexibility and mobility of people and the continued technological advancements are all contributory factors in increased international migration on a world scale. Lured by a better lifestyle or business or work opportunities, migrants may move on to other destinations, for instance, from New Zealand to Australia. As one of the migrant-receiving countries, New Zealand may find itself vying for the 'best' migrants, those who have the skills, experience, and educational achievements. Faced with this situation/challenge, the government of New Zealand saw fit to make changes to its immigration laws and introduced a set of criteria that is principally skill-based.

The modernisation of New Zealand's immigration laws in response to the changes in the world arena saw the inception of a more liberal piece of legislation, the 1987 Immigration Act. According to Ip & Murphy (2005), the 1987 Immigration Act has significantly altered the face of New Zealand and impacted dramatically on the country's national identity and its approach to race relations (Ip & Murphy, 2005). Ip & Murphy state that this led to rapid changes over the last two decades, transforming the ethnic profile of New Zealand.

Competing with other migrant-receiving countries such as USA, Canada and Australia has implications for New Zealand. To compete successfully, settlement policies and programmes will need to become a key tool to 'attract and retain' high-contributing migrants by assisting them in the settlement process. On the other hand, impediments to rapid settlement will increase the outflow of skilled migrants and reduce the total 'return' to New Zealand over the period that they do reside here (Fletcher, 1999). In the words of Pio (2007), "it is imperative that the government and employers do not lose the opportunity to create and sustain a positive environment for ethnic minority migrants" as they can serve as a "power house for change" (p. 646).

The findings derived from data collected from interview participants of this qualitative study translate well into promoting appreciation, understanding and demystification of the cultural behaviour of an increasing ethnic minority group in New Zealand. The major conclusions of the findings have illuminated the complexities and difficulties experienced by the 25 Chinese migrants, experiences which are unique to the individual, depending on their previous exposure to a foreign environment, their state of mind, language proficiency and personality. Not all of their experiences are negative as many identified positive aspects. Most acknowledged their personal growth as they moved through their process of acculturation. With personal growth and self-confidence as they made valiant attempts to integrate and assimilate into their host society and workplace. These migrants ventured into counter-cultural Confucianism practices, such as learning to be assertive, speak up and voice opinions.

This study adds another dimension to the existing literature on migrants and acculturation. The findings from the 25 ethnic minority migrant Chinese interviewed reveal the complexities and difficulties in the acculturation process, as they attempt to adapt to various aspects of their new environment. The acculturation process is made more difficult for migrants who have negative workplace encounters in their intercultural interactions resulting in misunderstandings and conflict. The findings also reveal the migrants' response mechanisms, particularly in learning to be more assertive. In addition, the findings show that the acculturation process is unique to the individual migrant and that factors such as host language proficiency and personal dispositions are significant. Finally, this study shows that the acculturation process was a period of changes, adjustments and personal growth and development.

Conflicts are inevitable where there are interactions between people of different cultural backgrounds, usually exacerbated by miscommunication or wrong interpretations, preconceptions or stereotyping. For migrant-receiving New Zealand, a prime concern for the government is to foster social

cohesion amongst its residents and achieve cultural synergy through successful, expedient migrant settlement. As with overseas research, studies in New Zealand have identified “labour market integration as a key factor in the successful settlement of Chinese immigrants” (Henderson, 2003, p. 160). Further, the successful settlement in New Zealand would depend on employment in a position commensurate with their skills and qualifications (Henderson, 2003).

In her study of work experiences of Indian women migrants in New Zealand, Pio (2005b) asserts that an enduring lesson from her research is that Indian migrant women “need to feel valued in their host country” (p. 71) and their initial work experiences are crucial, not only for their own self esteem but also for adding economic value to the world of work and harmony to exercises in social re-engineering. This conclusion applies not only to Indian women migrants; rather, it is a lesson concerning all migrants. All migrants need to feel accepted, valued and embraced as a productive and contributing member of the New Zealand society. This is congruent with Ip & Murphy’s (2005) assertion that unless New Zealanders come to terms positively with their Asian fellow citizens and recognise their presence as legitimate, social integration or cohesion will forever be illusive. The achievement of the latter will enable the country to move forward with a reformed identity. As Fletcher (1999) states, multiculturalism implied settlement is a two-way process involving change by both migrant and the host society.

Historically, New Zealand’s engagement with Asia goes back centuries. (Butcher, 2007; Ip, 2003b). The New Zealand 2006 Census points irrefutably to an increasingly multicultural society. As Ip (1996) maintains, the contribution of the ethnic minority migrant Chinese to New Zealand will amount to far more than trade links with Asia, or immediate concrete benefits like investment, business know-how and technological transfer. This study echoes the sentiments of Ip (1996) who claims that when the Chinese, like all other New Zealanders, can function free from prejudice and stereotyping, they will do much to enhance the nation as a truly robust multi-ethnic modern society.

The population statistics extracted from the 2006 Census clearly indicate that there is an increasingly multi-cultural society in New Zealand. To this end, New Zealand, being a migrant-receiving country such as Australia and Canada, is not alone. Human beings are all different with different attitudes, educational and cultural backgrounds. The uniqueness of human beings, made more significant from different backgrounds, mean that when they interact with each other, whether in the social or organisational domain, misunderstandings or misinterpretation may occur resulting in conflict situations. Although interpersonal conflicts are a natural course and arguably inevitable, a primary objective for New Zealand is to achieve social cohesion amongst its residents, be they host nationals, descendants from the pioneer migrants, recent and new migrants, and sojourners.

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APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET



Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

25 May 2006

Project Title

Organisational interpersonal conflict and ethnic minority migrant Chinese*: a study of the influence of the acculturation process.

**Ethnic Chinese means the people of Chinese origin or ancestry, who have cultural and traditional origins and backgrounds.*

An Invitation

My name is Nancy Chee Fun McIntyre. My qualifications are Bachelor of Business in Management and Master of Professional Business Studies in Management (First Class Honours). In furthering my qualifications, I am currently enrolled in part-time postgraduate studies at AUT University: the Master of Philosophy. Born in Kuala Lumpur of Chinese ethnicity, I emigrated to New Zealand in 1987, married a Kiwi of Scottish descent, and am currently employed fulltime in a management position. I wish to invite you to participate in this research project.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to find out whether the process (or length) of acculturation has any influence on ethnic minority migrant Chinese with respect to interpersonal conflict in the workplace.

How was I chosen for this invitation?

You are chosen to participate in this research because you fit the criteria of migrant ethnic Chinese*. **Ethnic Chinese means the people of Chinese origin or ancestry, who have cultural and traditional origins and backgrounds.*

What will happen in this research?

There are two types of interviews: (i) One-on-one; and (ii) Focus Group. With the one-on-one interviews, participants are interviewed one at a time whereas with the focus group interviews, each group of around five participants will be interviewed. The interviews are primarily unstructured, barring some lead-in questions (see Appendix B). The interviews will be observed, tape-recorded and transcribed by the interviewer. The material collected at the interviews, including interviewer's notes, are strictly guarded by privacy and confidentiality. All material, including Consent Forms, will eventually be securely destroyed, eg by machine shredding.

The one-on-one interviews are expected to take approximately an hour at each occurrence while the focus group interviews are expected to take between 90 and 120 minutes. A follow-up interview will only be requested if it is absolutely necessary to go over or clarify some points which may be significant.

All participants will be given the options of requesting for a transcript of their own interview to check for accuracy, and/or findings of the research. These options are included in the Consent Forms. For those who wish to exercise the option(s), they will be provided with a transcript of their interview, and/or a summary of the research findings when the project is completed.

What are the discomforts and risks?

Participants may experience embarrassment, discomfort or be upset as they recall events relating to interpersonal conflicts in an organisational setting.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

Participants have the option of halting the interview as soon as they begin to feel any discomfort. If the discomfort is acute, they have the option of discontinuing the interview; otherwise, they can opt to adjourn the interview to a later time/date, or that they can provide their recollection of the interpersonal conflict situation in written form after the interview. Should they wish, participants will have the opportunity to access AUT's Chinese Counsellor.

What are the benefits?

This research will be beneficial on several fronts. First, it will inform, promote and encourage appreciation and understanding of another race and culture – the ethnic minority migrant Chinese. In New Zealand and indeed other nations, in the advent of globalisation and all that it entails, this appreciation and understanding will be most advantageous to educationalists, employees, management personnel and management practitioners, and the wider community. It will also benefit the interview participants as well as the researcher personally. This will be through enhanced personal understanding as the interviewees work through the process of personal reflection and observations, as well as shared knowledge and understanding especially with respect to focus group interviews.

How will my privacy be protected?

The researcher commits to guarding the privacy and confidentiality of all participants. Confidentiality is assured. There will be no mention of names or identification. Participants will have the option of checking the transcripts which relate to them, to ensure their privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. Those who consent to participating in focus groups will also commit to privacy and confidentiality to each other.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The costs to participants are:

- (i) time to participate in the duration of the interview(s) or focus group – approximately an hour for one-on-one interviews while focus groups may take between 90 to 120 minutes; and,
- (ii) incidental expenses (petrol, bus/train fares).

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

As your participation is on a voluntary basis, you may wish to take some time to consider this invitation over the next two weeks but I would appreciate a response by ____ (date) _____. I shall contact you in the end of the first week to check that you have received this Information Sheet and answer any queries you may have.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you wish to participate in this research, please signify your agreement on completing and signing the Consent to Participation in Research form attached (see Appendix C One-on-One Interviews).

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Yes. You may exercise this option by ticking the appropriate box in the Consent to Participation in Research form.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Principal Supervisor: Dr Edwina Pio via email 'edwina.pio@aut.ac.nz' or phone her on 09-921-9999 extension 5130.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTC: Madeline Banda via email 'madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz' or phone her on 09-921-9999 extension 8044.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?***Researcher Contact Details:***

If you have any queries about any of the information contained in this document or if you wish to clarify any point or obtain further information, please contact me on 09-921-9640 or 021-555-896 or email me via 'nancy.mcintyre@aut.ac.nz'.

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Edwina Pio via email 'edwina.pio@aut.ac.nz' or phone her on 09-921-9999 extension 5130.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on

09 August 2006, **AUTC Reference number 06/120.**

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.



Preliminaries – Introduction and Establishing Rapport

Unstructured, Open-ended Questions – A Sample

Each interviewee will be invited to talk about these topics.

- Duration in the country, what made them choose to immigrate to New Zealand.
- Employment – interviewee to describe their work and work responsibilities, how long in the position/department/company.
- Relationships – encourage interviewee to describe in detail their current and previous relationships with their supervisors, managers, and the fellow work colleagues.
- Conflicts and tensions – invite interviewee to recall and recount any interpersonal conflict situation in their work environment they have encountered, whether present or previous employment, and invite them to describe the situation freely and openly. Ask open-ended questions such as, “Please describe the conflict for me?” “How did the situation come about?” “How did you feel?” “What was your initial response?” “How did you react?” “What did you do?” “Please describe what you did at the time?” “What were the consequences?” “How did you handle interpersonal conflict in your workplace, if any, when you first arrived in New Zealand?” “How would you handle the conflict now?”
- End the interview with inviting the interviewee to say anything else which they think is relevant to this research.

APPENDIX C: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH



CONSENT TO PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH **ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS**

Title of Project: **Organisational interpersonal conflict and ethnic minority migrant Chinese: a study of the influence of the acculturation process.**

Project Supervisor: **Dr Edwina Pio, Principal Supervisor**

Researcher: **Nancy McIntyre**

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project (Information Sheet).
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that the interview will be observed, audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant observation notes, tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to have the opportunity to read through the transcript of my interview: tick one: Yes ☐ No ☐
- I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research: tick one: Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's Signature: _____

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate): _____

Date: _____

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on

09 August 2006, **AUTEC Reference number 06/120.**

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

APPENDIX D: SHORT QUESTIONNAIRE



Short questionnaire to collect personal particulars

Your Name: _____

Age: 20-35 ☐ 36-50 ☐ 51-65 ☐ Above 65 ☐

Gender: Female ☐ Male ☐

Your Occupation: _____

Country of Origin: _____

Date of Arrival in
New Zealand: _____

Residency Status: Permanent Resident ☐ Citizen ☐
(New Zealand)

Other Details:
(if relevant) _____

APPENDIX E: MAIN THEMES FROM FINDINGS

	<u>Characteristics: Dimensions</u>	<u>Exemplifying Extracts</u>
1.	Acculturation – a Conscious Choice	Barbara (Accountant, 27 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore): <i>“I believe that an immigrant’s progress in the acculturation process is very much dependant on the immediate environment they choose to be in. For example, if you (immigrant) choose to stay with your own ethnic group, you’ll feel comfortable so much so that you don’t venture outside that group. You’re not going to get a lot of chances in knowing the Kiwi culture but if you venture out of that, and start to get more from the cultural side of the locals, then you’ll progress very fast. If you keep staying with your cultural group, then progress can be slow. In other words, the more you (actively) assimilate, the easier for you to feel comfortable, feel at home (in this country). It all comes down to how fast you can assimilate (into the host culture). There are a number of factors – opportunities that are open to you, the type of job you’re in ... whether you’re working in an Asian company or working in a Kiwi company, as well as personal choice. Do you want to stay with your own ethnic group and be comfortable in that fringe minority or would you like to assimilate to the mainstream so that’s a personal choice. Sometimes it’s a deliberate, personal choice because you’re part of a wider community. You would be stepping out of your comfort zone.”</i>
2.	Acculturation – a Gradual Process	Barbara, her acculturation process was gradual: <i>“It’s a gradual thing (for me). The thing is Asian culture is not into divulging too much about their personal life. My personal life is my personal life, none of your business, but Kiwis see it differently, like it’s a conversation piece. Now, for me, I’m quite willing to open up and share. Over the years, years of mixing with locals, I’ve got used to that. It impacts on your interpersonal relationships, it actually does. You open yourself more so the other party will think, ‘Oh yes, she is approachable’. And not only that, it increases your social contact (with the locals) and bridge that gap by communicating.”</i>
3.	Acculturation – a Case for Changing and Adapting	Tony, working in the banking sector, 7 years in New Zealand, originally from Mainland China) observed: <i>“I mean Chinese people, migrants, who’ve been here 10 years, even 20 years, a lot of them still can’t speak good English because they didn’t try hard enough to learn it basically. It’s not because they are dumb. They work hard but they still try to keep...actually...they try to separate themselves from the people and the culture and things in this country, New Zealand, because they feel ‘I’m Chinese’. Yes, I still feel I’m a Chinese but a Chinese doesn’t mean you’ve got to use chopsticks rather than knife and fork. Nothing wrong with using (knife and fork). And Chinese doesn’t mean you can’t speak English. We’re in this country and some things got to be changed, for example, you have to follow the laws here, you’ve got to speak the language. You’re in this specific place, you got to adapt yourself into it. Although you can keep a lot of things of your own (culture) if they do not offend others nor hurt others’ feelings or damage other people’s lives.</i>

4.	Acculturation – Perceived Positive Effects Resulting from Changed Behaviour	Jenny (Accountant, 17 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore): <i>“Another thing I picked up very quickly from the New Zealand culture is that when they do something, they always let everybody know what they’ve done, it’s their idea and everything, whereas we Asian (Chinese), we are modest and we always keep quiet. But now I picked that up, I blow my trumpet as well so the moment I did something good and a new idea or something that’s benefiting the company, I do say that this is my idea. I’m not shy to do it anymore. I make it a point that they (bosses) know it’s from me. Yes, aggressive now!”</i>
5.	Immersion into Host Culture	Lucy (HR Officer, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): <i>“It’s a Kiwi culture to be outspoken and to speak up for yourself. I found that in the New Zealand education system as over here the younger kiddies are given the freedom and encouragement with their school project, research work or anything, whereas in my home country, the teacher is the boss and information is poured into students to be absorbed. That’s the way we were taught. We were not able to question because you assumed the ‘teacher knows best’. Over here students are given the freedom of choice, freedom of expression. In the workplace, I learned a lot from my manager, learned to challenge each other’s thoughts.”</i>
6.	Acculturation – Ease and Speed Vary from Person to Person. In accordance with previous exposure to other cultures, personal disposition, etc.	Charlie (Auditor, 26 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): <i>“I actually worked in London as well and I’ve worked in Singapore and basically I worked in multinational organisations – British, American, Arabian, Japanese. I’ve been exposed to all different cultures so I suppose in some ways you learn to adapt. You don’t actually know the culture until you’re in, so because of my job, the exposure, you learn to manage all that.”</i>
7.	Saving Face to Allow Others the Grace of Exiting	Warren (Manager, 5 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): <i>“I guess along the way growing up, probably interacting with my parents, friends or whatever, or being Asian, I always believe in giving people face, ‘bei-mean’. It’s a cultural thing. ‘Bei-mean’ (literally mean “to give face”). I realise that when it comes to dealing with people whether the person is Asian or Caucasian or whatever race, people always have an ego in them. That’s something I learned, people have ego in them. People want to feel nice. And especially in the position of being a manager, right now I need more of that, to give people the grace of exiting, exiting when the tension (of the confrontation/conflict) becomes too unbearable. I can say, ‘I disagree with you, Sir’ but then at the end of day, I’ve to put it in such a way it saves face for my boss.”</i>
8..	Length of Residence in Host Country	Jenny: <i>“I’ve been here for so long (17 years). Probably I learned their (Kiwi) culture.”</i>
9.	Personality, and Personal Choice	Terry (Architect, 15 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): <i>“I think it’s a combination of (my) personality, manners, personal attitude and also I think it’s my initiative to actually understand and fit in well into the (New Zealand) society. Do as the Romans do. Because you’re in a foreign land. That’s one thing very important for me. Also, you’ve got to be able to be flexible. You cannot bring your old self into another country. You’ve to fit and adapt to suit (local environment). If you don’t make the effort to learn...how can you progress, how can you fit in well?”</i>

10.	Conflict Experiences and Handling Methods: Learning from the Locals	<p>Martin (working in the hospitality sector, 26 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): <i>"(Where encountering conflict) ...you just have to tell people how you feel. I probably picked this up along the way, unconsciously. It's just like a kid learning things – you pick up things along the way gradually and that's what I think happened to me, learned along the way. You know, just unconsciously follow what people (here) do."</i></p> <p>Suzie (Administrator, 7 years in New Zealand, originally from Mainland China): <i>"From my observations of)...the real life in the workplace, I understand the Western country people deal with the conflict quite differently from the Asian people. But generally, from the beginning till now I combine the Western and the Chinese way when I deal with conflicts. I'm not always quiet but I certainly will talk it out when I think it's...if I feel I should."</i></p> <p>Lucy (HR Officer, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): <i>"I (observed) that they (Kiwis) are more outspoken. I guess it's from their school days where they've been exposed to expressing themselves and their views. That's the main difference between the Chinese culture and the Kiwi culture, because in (our) School, we never had any character-building, it's just study, study, study, no people subjects. We just listen (to the teachers, and absorb). Coming from Malaysia, we think women should be submissive. Maybe it's our upbringing and the country we were brought up in. Now that I'm here (in New Zealand), we are actually encouraged to speak up, express our views and all that. They encourage us to speak up at meetings. Like in schools here, the kids are encouraged to do that too (speak up, express their views)."</i></p> <p>Barbara (Accountant, 27 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore): <i>"The Asian way, there's conditioning, maybe early childhood conditioning from family, teachers. You're taught not to be a trouble-maker. Told not to cause too much confrontation... it's not nice. In Singapore (my home country), the working environment is very much managed like in a school, where the principal says this and everybody do as they've been told. If you don't do what you've been told you'd be punished."</i></p> <p>Bruce (working in the service industry, 20 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore): <i>"...because over the years I've learned that if you don't stand up for yourself, nobody will. Because from my past experience in New Zealand, I find that you need to do that (be vocal, stand up for yourself). You can't rely on other people to stand up for you, regardless of what. You just need to stand up for yourself. This means that I let the other person know that hey, this is not right, or hey, you're looking at it the wrong angle. Just be vocal and then to create an awareness with the Kiwis here."</i></p>
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11.	Sense of Freedom, Liberation and Empowerment	<p>Annie (Administrator, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): <i>"Speaking up... I feel tougher, more stronger, I suppose. Like people won't easily bully, not as much, or step over you. They don't, not so easily. If you don't speak up I suffer myself then because nobody knows what happened. If I don't speak up, they probably manipulate you more like if I am too nice (and) say yes, yes, yes. I feel that they (Kiwis) use you more. I feel this at (my) work."</i></p> <p>Alicia (Manager, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): <i>"It's made me suddenly realise, hmmm, if I have a doubt about something I actually have the right to say something. It was quite empowering for myself but the thing is it didn't come suddenly (speaking up, being assertive), it graaaduuuaally....came, definitely over the years. On a continuum from 1 to 10, I guess I started at 1 (about six years ago). I'm still on 6 or 7 and I'd like to get past 7. I'm progressing along the way."</i></p> <p>Barbara (Accountant, 27 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore): <i>"You feel (that) more freedom. There's a certain freedom in that, actually. There's a certain freedom and also you confront your fear ... it takes away the fear. Actually you're facing the fear, fear of people disagreeing with you, fear of confrontation, because there're amicable and peaceful way of solving conflict, confrontations."</i></p>
12.	Building Self-Confidence in a New Land	<p>Felicia (Accountant, 14 years in New Zealand, originally from Indonesia): <i>"They used to make fun of me, of my accent. Over time, I learnt that there're many types of people. Working in a café bar and restaurant was really good for me. I learnt a lot. I learned how to deal with people. I learned how people deal with one another. It's interesting working in a restaurant as while working, you can still observe people, how they behave with one another. That added to my experience. By watching and observing, I actually learned and with built-up knowledge, it's built my confidence back. I'm not scared (any more). (With the passage of time), I feel that I'm now older, much older than when I first started working in the bar/restaurant as a student. I've got more responsibilities and I've got full authority for myself (now in a professional job)."</i></p> <p>Jenny (Accountant, 17 years in New Zealand, originally from Singapore): <i>"...(over the years and changing jobs) and now I've a lot of confidence. I've picked up a lot of experience and in terms of New Zealand, knowing financial things, reporting and all their requirements by the government, I'm totally outspoken in the sense that I know that I know my work much, much better. I feel that I'm contributing a lot to my present job (with my years of experience) as my boss is from the UK and I can point out to him certain things like GST and tax issues and he appreciates me."</i></p>

APPENDIX F: MAJOR RESULTS FROM NVIVO7

Main Node: Acculturation

Sub Nodes: (Migrant's) Culture
Character and Personality
(Learn to become more) Assertive
Length (of residence) in New Zealand
Communication
English Language Proficiency
Self-confidence
Speaking Up

Main Node: Acculturation Example:

Tony (working in the banking sector, 7 years in New Zealand, originally from Mainland China): *"I studied the Western culture and I worked in multi-national companies in China (before coming to New Zealand) and I picked up a lot of values from the West cultures then. In New Zealand, the first value I picked up is DIY. Do it yourself, be independent and self-reliant. Back in China I hardly did any housework. We had a nanny and cleaners to help with the chores. We (Chinese) make up excuses about being busy at work. I think it's part of the Kiwi culture because every man, mum and dad, including the kids, they all do housework. Not every family but 99% and that kind of labour or work make them actually happy and then I started trying do that myself and then I found I actually enjoy doing those work, in the garage and carpentry. My wife enjoys gardening. I found it enjoyable and I studied this and I think this is something I made quite a big change after coming to New Zealand. I try to do things by myself. It makes me feel more capable, more valuable, and good for my self esteem. That's good."*

Main Node: Conflict Experiences (Interpersonal, in the workplace)

Sub Nodes: Conflict Handling Styles
Conflict Avoidance
Training and Coaching on Conflict Management
Self-confidence
Speaking Up

Main Node: Conflict Experiences Example

Andrew (Bank Manager, 18 years in New Zealand, originally from Vietnam): *"I'd say I'd have unconsciously learned from the locals as to how they confront with an issue (conflict) and slowly learn the way later on when you hit a similar situation, you sort of have a bit of knowledge which you've observed previously what they've done. I'd say I've taken some of their ways throughout my working life. I definitely taken some of my work colleagues in the way they approach the issues and stuff like that. Definitely have. I'd say*

I'll probably become more and more confident in that area (handling interpersonal conflict) as I progress through different levels in my banking career which (incidentally) helps to build up my confidence. I really can't see any drawbacks in the future such that if an issue crops up, I would say definitely confront the issue."

Main Node: Concern for Others' Feelings

Sub Nodes: Culture
Confucianism
Respect
Peace and Harmony
Saving Face/Facework

Sub Node: Saving Face Example

Warren (Manager, 5 years in New Zealand, originally from Malaysia): *"I guess along the way growing up, probably interacting with my parents, friends or whatever, or being Asian, I always believe in giving people face, 'bei-mean'. It's a cultural thing. 'Bei-mean' (literally mean "to give face"). I realise that when it comes to dealing with people whether the person is Asian or Caucasian or whatever race, people always have an ego in them. That's something I learned, people have ego in them. People want to feel nice. And especially in the position of being a manager, right now I need more of that, to give people the grace of exiting, exiting when the tension (of the confrontation/conflict) becomes too unbearable. I can say, 'I disagree with you, Sir' but then at the end of day, I've to put it in such a way it saves face for my boss. For me at the end of the day I want to have that rapport with my (New Zealand) colleagues. It's also a means of survival, I guess, as an Asian working in a New Zealand context. I don't burn my bridges. I guess it comes from the Malaysian environment that besides saving face we need to build networks...saving face (such that) at the end of the day you don't offend people."*