

Abstract

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Sunday, 22 July 2007

ABSTRACT

The genesis of this research largely stems from autobiographical experiences as a visible Chinese woman and a first generation immigrant mother raising a Kiwinized daughter. My self-reflection, self-affirmation and self-discovery of my gender, ethnic and nation identity in many ways shaped the inquiries of this research. One of the main aims of the research is to inquire the myth of visible Chinese ethnic migrants as the inassimilable perpetual other because of their racial features. The result of this research unequivocally dispels this myth. Indeed, the research emphatically reflects that daughters born or bred in New Zealand-second generation Chinese New Zealanders-have integrated and affirmed themselves as New Zealanders and are proud of their nation identity. Sociological and cultural factors to varying degrees invariably shape our psyche and identity. While there are the blessings of the dual cultures-the best of both worlds- there are disadvantages and the danger of assimilation. For hypervisible ethnic minority, the reality is there can never be total assimilation; integration or cultural hybridity is the inevitable, necessary and better alternative. It is the researcher's hope that this dissertation will in a small way render marginalized and stereotyped Chinese women a voice to speak for themselves from the generation of the pioneering women settlers to the present contemporary generation. Although the numbers of participants are small because of the nature of the research, they are nevertheless, subjective, personal and also collective voices that echo as the perpetual "other" to white homogenous culture or biculture.

Through the course of the research, it has become apparent that the xenophobia of the 1990s resonates the fear of racial difference and the anxiety that the national identity would be threatened by cultural diversity. There is a need to address this fear through research, dialogue and education and not repress it as an irrational xenophobic impulse in order for a negotiated resolution to move forward. It is equally apparent that it is timely that mainstream society confront the perception of the construction of national identity that is based on British heritage of the past. As individual identity evolves as one matures so should the national identity evolve to include diverse cultures otherwise our national identity remains stagnant, imprisoned by the past. There is a need for the construction of national identity to evolve as we New Zealanders mature as a nation.