

From Assimilation to Multi-culturalism

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Wednesday, 08 August 2007

NZST 511
YOUNG

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October 2005

196141980

FROM ASSIMILATION TO MULTICULTURALISM

Evidence of an evolving model of settlement for the Chinese community in New Zealand from 1950 to the present.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the literature

review undertaken as the first part of this exercise[1]

I reviewed the early history of the Chinese in New Zealand which included their first arrival as sojourner gold miners, their later move to urban centres and official discouragement of further migration and racial discrimination in the form of the Poll Tax and restrictions on the migration of women. I noted that at the beginning of the Second World War the Government allowed only the temporary entry of a group of Chinese women and children as a humanitarian measure, but

at war's end the Government relented and allowed them to stay and also allowed further family reunification - but not migration of unrelated persons. As a result more children were born, but because of cultural isolation, (arising from generally uneducated parents and the Communist takeover of China) these all grew up adopting the English language and local culture and lost contact with their Chinese heritage. I concluded that it also appeared to be official policy to encourage assimilation of the Chinese into the host culture in the hope that within a generation or two the Chinese would be fully merged through free inter-marriage and the "problem" of their existence as a separate racial group would largely disappear.

2. THESIS

My thesis is that:

After the Second World War, the Chinese community in New Zealand as a group were more-or-less willing participants in a process of assimilation.

In the mid-1970s some young "leaders"[i] in the community were aware, through developments in Australia and Canada, that multiculturalism instead of assimilation might be a preferable model, but were themselves struggling with their own identities.

From the late 1970s to the mid 1990s the energy devoted by the general community to the Treaty of Waitangi, biculturalism and the Maori Renaissance arrested or at least slowed the development of multiculturalism as a political concept for implementation in New Zealand.

The change of policy which allowed large numbers of Asians including Chinese to migrate to New Zealand from 1986 through to the late 1990s, together with a revival of China's economic and political fortunes, sparked a revive of interest in Chinese identity and multiculturalism among the Chinese in New Zealand.

The challenge of blending the concepts inherent in biculturalism and multiculturalism in the New Zealand context is being taken up but only slowly, particularly by those from with the established (Chinese) migrant community who wish for the latter but appreciate the necessity of the former.

My research has been aimed at establishing evidence of this stream of development.

3. EARLIER RESEARCH

NAMING PRACTICES AND IDENTITY

In earlier research^[2] on discrimination against the Chinese in New Zealand, I reviewed the (chronological) list of aliens who had been granted citizenship. The purpose of that exercise was partly to establish the time distribution of the grant of citizenship to the Chinese once this was allowed again in 1951. The Chinese grantees were found by primarily checking their place of birth but I also found that almost invariably they were listed by the Romanised version of their Chinese names and only under that name. The person who was known publicly in New Zealand as Steven Young for example, "on the day of judgement" would revert to his original name of Young Sui Sang. And so it is with nearly every Chinese person in New Zealand in the original migrant community. On the other hand their New Zealand-born children are given English names at birth to go with their Romanised Chinese surname and although they are also given Chinese names by their grandparents, these are rarely used and they grow up as "Selena Young", "Nicola Young" and "Andrew Young" etc.

In New Zealand, (and also in Australia and Canada) it is very common for nearly every Chinese person who functions at least part-time in an English-speaking environment to adopt an English name.

This is partly for the convenience of their acquaintances in the non-Chinese majority, but is also a measure of the degree that the Chinese community accepts its assimilation, because this naming practice is totally accepted and considered unremarkable.

Naming and

identity are closely linked, and it would be reasonable to assume that community naming practices reflect community identity also. A community which accepts a naming practice in which nearly every one of its members is named or renamed with a name drawn from the dominant culture is well on its way to becoming totally assimilated.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW (BOOKS)

To establish the degree of assimilation of Chinese community within New Zealand in the period from 1950 through to 1985, I referred to the small number of texts which are considered standard reference on this rather specialised area of research.

BICKLEEN FONG

Bickleen Fong's
1959 book[3]

is based on research for her 1955 MA thesis which was the first formal study of the Chinese in New Zealand. In the early 1950s, the question was how the Chinese community would become part of the wider New Zealand community. Because this community was relatively small compared with the host community, it was believed that it would need to "assimilate".

It is useful to refer to Fong's definitions of various terms rather than to more current definitions because it was in the 1950s that the "assimilation" took place. To understand better what took place at that time we need to understand what those terms meant then.

Thus between two groups in society:

INTERACTION

Interactions arise after contact, even after initial indifference, and usually include conflict and competition "especially if the interacting individuals are foreign to one another in racial characteristics, habits, customs and ideals." [4] "The stages of contact and competition, accommodation and eventual assimilation are progressive and irreversible." [5]

ACCOMMODATION

"The process by which competing and conflicting individuals and groups adjust their relationships to each other in order to overcome difficulties which arise in competition, contravention or conflict." [6]

"As competition and conflict are modified and individuals come to know each other, they become more tolerant, paving the way for acculturation." [7]

ACCULTURATION

Has been defined as "the process whereby societies of different cultures are modified through fairly close and long continued contact but without a complete blending of the two cultures"[8] It is a preliminary step to -

ASSIMILATION

Which is " an advanced social process characterized by decreasing differentiation between individuals and groups as well as by increased unity of action, attitude and mental processes with respect to common interests and goals"[9]

These definitions are somewhat different from current definitions. The "latest" definition (although not necessarily the most authoritative) from the Wikipedia[ii] defines "assimilation" as:

"In the social sciences, assimilation is the process of integration whereby immigrants, or other minority groups, are "absorbed" into a generally larger community. This presumes a loss of all characteristics which make the newcomers different. A region where assimilation is occurring is sometimes referred to as a "melting pot"."[10]

It is convenient at this point to include a definition of "integration". The definition from Wikipedia is an example of up-to-the-minute usage:

INTEGRATION

Racial integration or simply integration includes desegregation (the process of ending systematic racial segregation). In addition to desegregation, integration includes goals such as leveling barriers to association, creating equal opportunity regardless of race, and the development of a culture that draws on diverse traditions, rather than merely bringing a racial minority into the majority

culture. Desegregation is largely a legal matter, integration largely a social one.[11]

This is very close to current usage in New Zealand where, in the ethnic communities, we are somewhat sensitive in asserting that integration must have the essential element of the majority also incorporating some features of the minorities into the mainstream. Desegregation was never much of a problem in New Zealand or has been overcome.

5. CONCLUSIONS FROM EARLIER RESEARCH

BICKLEEN FONG

In her book, Fong describes the characteristics of what she calls the first, second and third generation of Chinese migrants, distinguished from one another by their age, circumstances of their arrival in New Zealand and the degree of interactions with the dominant community. She does on to describe a small number of case studies of Chinese in each of these three generations. The responses reflect a community cut off from its cultural roots, slowly adjusting to improving social conditions, and increasingly accepted by the wider community.

Fong concludes that conditions favouring assimilation include the repeal of immigration legislation, the availability of naturalization, the absence of segregation and free social intercourse. She also notes the wide acceptance or interest in Chinese culture and that there was no legal bar to entry to various occupations and professions. She notes that intermarriage is increasingly common but not well-accepted.

Towards the end of her book, Fong states that assimilation is (ideally) "... a two-way process, yet for the New Zealand Chinese it has been mainly a one-way process - that of Chinese assimilating New Zealand culture, because," she admits: "the Chinese in New Zealand are not capable of offering something of their own culture in return"[12] and hopes that in the future educated Chinese will be "admitted to enrich the cultural life of New Zealand which tends to be insular".

Finally she states "The whole world is undergoing a vigorous though painful process of re-integration. The West too should develop an attitude of interest and tolerance towards people and cultures that are non-Western."

It would appear that while describing a rapid process of assimilation of the Chinese, Fong has sensed the underlying unfairness and one-sidedness of the process and has already identified a possible future where there is a fuller exchange of cultures. Although not quite "integration" as it is now understood, she is hoping for a future where the constituent cultures of New Zealand exist in closer balance.

STUART GREIF

In 1969, some 15 years after Fong's original research Stuart Greif also undertook a study of the Chinese in New Zealand for his PhD and wrote a book based on it. In Part II of this book[13] published in 1974, Greif concludes that the home environment, the limited language capabilities of the parents and the New Zealand education system militate against the retention of Chinese language and culture. He notes that the then-current vogue for non-traditional Chinese social, dance and sports clubs do nothing to advance Chinese culture but merely allow Chinese to meet socially. He predicts that complete assimilation is inevitable unless there is an influx of new Chinese migrants who bring their cultural skills with them.

Following a survey, Greif concluded that assimilation was proceeding at speed and was inevitable at least by the younger age group. However even Greif allowed that "Social integration is a two-way process..." but says nothing of the accommodation that the host society might make towards this process. Greif concluded from his research that the Chinese felt that they enjoyed equal rights to the majority. He also found that the majority felt that the Government was responsive to their needs.

Since these questions were posed to people whose parents spoke little English, and who, on average, had perhaps three years of secondary school Social Studies and little exposure to world events let alone political theory, they may have limited validity.

Following a fairly detailed analysis of responses to questions, Greif posits that that "... we can be fairly certain that within a short while, only race, child-rearing (to a certain degree) and cooking will differentiate the Chinese New Zealanders - or rather the New Zealanders of Chinese ancestry - from other New Zealanders.

CHARLES SEDGWICK

Sedgwick's massive PhD thesis[14] was completed in 1982 after 10 years of research and comprises a comprehensive history of the Chinese in New Zealand.

His last chapter "Historic Conflicts and Contemporary Organisations:1960-1976" reflects the developments in the Chinese community 10 years after Greif book including the instigation of at least three massive building projects (multi-purpose sports halls) within the Chinese community in New Zealand. It does little justice to Sedgwick's scholarship to extract a single idea: that these projects were undertaken to address urgent social needs within the community. Although unstated at the time, these needs included a resistance to total assimilation. (Sedgwick also noted that a by-product of the building projects was a renewal of the community's leadership by younger people by-passing the existing formal structures which had begun to ossify.)

Sedgwick noted that "New Zealand Government policy as regards ethnic minorities has changed markedly from one that initially gave support to assimilation, later integration and now multiculturalism." Since Sedgwick expressed that view, the concept of biculturalism has become established as a constitutional imperative, with integration and multiculturalism downgraded to social objectives.

6. ASIMMILATION FROM 1950 TO END OF THE 1970s

The standard references regarding the Chinese in New Zealand: the books by Bickleen Fong, and Stuart Greif and the unpublished PhD thesis by Charles Sedgwick, all completed before 1982, agree that the Chinese in New Zealand were well on the way to total assimilation. Both Fong and Sedgwick at some point in their writings allowed that some form of integration or multiculturalism was either desirable or incipient. (Greif was more concerned with surveying in detail a range of Chinese on a list of topics; however he did identify Stephen Chan as a very early activist who claimed that being Chinese was only incidental to his unusual persona. He was

certainly not about to be assimilated, but from his writings, apparently had no ambition to evangelise the local Chinese - being concerned about himself. However, Stephen Chan departed New Zealand for a career overseas and apparently had no lasting impact on the Chinese community here.)

While Sedgwick seemed to be particularly well-informed about the details of community group activities, even he might have been too early to catch the first ripple of a counter-movement outside the formal structures of the community.

7. RESEARCH BASED ON NON-SCHOLARLY REFERENCES

In the second part of my research I have located the writings of two Chinese New Zealanders who, for various reasons, have had occasion to express themselves publicly in the general area of assimilation, identity, integration and multiculturalism.

Except for those who live and work in the academic sphere, people do not leave behind much evidence of their thinking especially if they are members of ethnic minorities. For all sorts of reasons, members of ethnic minorities either do not have the opportunity to express themselves in a thoughtful way in public (due to a lack of a vehicle, or lack of an audience), or are reticent in doing so because of social pressure from their ethnic groups. The social pressures can be in the form of group disapproval that the inner feelings of the group are being exposed, that the ideas expressed are not truly "representative" of the group, and that the person writing or speaking out are attracting attention to themselves for unworthy reasons - and therefore suspect in their statements.

It is therefore doubly rare for such people to express themselves on the public record on the same or related topics some years apart, so that the development (or lack of development) in their ideas can be examined.

The following analyses rather unavoidably involve some deconstruction of the texts examined. However, in doing so I have avoided using any

information about the subjects except that which has been placed in the public record by the subjects themselves.

HELENE WONG

Helene Wong was born in 1949 of Chinese parents in Utiku in the central North Island. She came to Wellington to attend university and soon took an interest in acting and productions. She gained further training at Harvard University - Cambridge, The Drama Studio - Berkeley and Jeremiah Comey Studio - Hollywood according to her acting CV. [15] Helene produced the film Footprints of the Dragon part of a television series, New Zealand: An Immigrant Nation. She has been a member of the New Zealand Film Commission, is a film reviewer for the NZ Listen and has, undoubtedly, a number of other creative projects in development.

However in the late 1970s she was a member of Robert Muldoon's "Think Tank", a precursor to the Policy Advisory Group of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and in that capacity addressed the forum The Child in the Multicultural Society in Auckland on 26 August 1979.[16] Significantly perhaps, she signs off her notes as "Helene Knox." (Some time post 1979 she reverts to calling herself "Helene Wong" although she remains married to the same person.)

In her speech notes, Helene Wong re-states a definition of a multi-cultural society and notes that her definitions are "in the middle of a range of definitions"; with one extreme advocating a "melting pot" society to achieve almost total homogeneity and the other the maintenance of cultural purity.

Interestingly, Helene Wong in 1979 barely comments on the possible contributions of Maori to a multicultural society in New Zealand. In one of the few mentions of Maori she poses a question about identity by asking what is "good" and "bad" about a (highly hypothetical) Maori businessman who comes home to his marae from wheeling and dealing to listen to endless speeches about small matters. The example is rhetorical, superficial and facile. However she does also comment on the reaction to TV One

broadcasting programme summaries in Maori during Maori Language Week, notes that none of the "anti" people spoke out in public and posits that they were in the minority and knew it.

In the speech

notes Helene Wong cites example from her own life to illustrate how her own attitude to assimilation and identity had changed. Years ago young Helene had reacted with outrage when a girl walking past her parents' shop had called out "Ching Chong Chinaman" She had raced out the door and dug her fingers into the arms of the perpetrator and hung on, angry and frustrated that she did not have the words to express her anger (that she had been publicly stigmatised as different from others in the community). She admits to suppressing her Chinese characteristics, "I made no attempt to retain the language, nor to participate in sports and cultural activities; I sought only European friends and European-dominated pastimes; I was uninterested in meeting Chinese boys, and horror or horrors, I much preferred European food! I used to be secretly pleased when close friends said 'You know, I never think of you as Chinese.' "

Helene at some

point before 1979 undergoes a conversion and recants these heresies of identity. "Well that was when I was much younger. My attitudes have changed since. Instead of feeling annoyed when someone does a double-take upon meeting me for the first time (as Helene Knox?) I am now only amused and mentally chalk up another one for the minorities."

At some point, presumably after she came down from Utiku to attend Victoria University around 1968, she also converted from the assimilationist model to a multicultural model.

However the

current concept of integration is not fully formed: In discussing the result of then-current policies Helene Wong notes many young people at that time, having been pressured to adopt pakeha culture and having largely forgotten their own culture, are regarded as "cultural cripples." Revealingly, she goes on to say: "It is assumed that they are successful products of the old "assimilation" and "integration" policies."

In 1979 therefore, the concept of "integration" had not acquired its current differentiated and

almost opposite meaning of a two-way cultural process in which the dominant culture also changes and adapts as minority cultures become absorbed.

Why is this significant? Because if Helene Wong, while working in the office of the Prime Minister as an advisor developing and implementing policy, has not adopted the current use of "integration" then it is likely that it has not been adopted in Government at that time.

Later in her speech she advocates a conscious effort by parents to inculcate traditional cultural values in children starting from a young age, but questions whether it is practical to avoid mixed marriages.

There is perhaps an autobiographical echo when she cites a recent encounter: "Just this week I met a young Chinese girl who was obviously, as we Chinese say, very Europeanise; she told me quite matter-of-factly, that she was approaching the time when she would soon be visiting Hong Kong - in other words, her parents were bundling her off to find a husband; she was the right age, and they didn't like her having a European boyfriend." Helene continues: "This sort of practice is, I think, "old fashion"....What I am trying to say is that we ought to be discriminating about what we want to preserve and be realistic about other attitudes that exist in society - in the case of this example it is the strong attitude we have today towards the individual's right and freedom to choose one's marriage partner."

Helene Wong, in 1979, as gifted young graduate in the office of the Prime Minister, developing and implementing policy has acknowledged that assimilation is no longer a desirable policy for settlement, has moved on personally from wanting to become culturally and racially invisible, is pushing a Government line for multiculturalism (presumably as part of her job) and is advocating the emphasis of cultural identity. However the current concept of "integration" has not been developed and adopted as part of the discourse.

Let us compare what Helene Wong says in 1995. In the intervening 16 years, New Zealand's economy has been transformed, the Maori Renaissance has moved into high gear and there has been an influx of migrants from Asia. Public abuse of Asians in Auckland has become rife.

In her 1995

Clinton Roper Peace lecture: Ching Chong

Chinamen, When Friends Become Strangers[17]

Helene Wong laments the estrangement

in New Zealand society arising through dramatically increased public expression of racial prejudice and abuse against Asians and particularly the Chinese in Auckland. For the long-established

Chinese community there is cause to question how genuine is their acceptance.

For the pakeha, the dramatic increase in Asian faces is highly threatening, causing them to objectify the cause of their anxiety.

The rest of her

lecture is largely a list of recommendations to mitigate that estrangement - which amount to a programme for both the host community and the migrant communities to work through in order to achieve integration.

Thinking through the effect of

increased migration in a social impact report; considering a wide range of issues related to the characteristics of the migrants themselves and their possible effects on the communities in which they would take up residence, the services they would require. Addressing the language learning needs of the migrant families,

Educating the host communities

about the culture of the new migrants, and actively encouraging their social mixing at schools and elsewhere and introducing migrants to non-Confucian paradigms of society (in relation to authority and group behaviour)

Media issues of representation/misrepresentation, stereotyping in journalism, images in film and television.

She also raised the need to

resolve differences between the old and new Chinese migrants, the relationship between migrants and Maori, and the development of a more forthright declaration of what Chinese want in their relationship with the host community.

Finally she recommends some steps

that the European majority can take (towards an integrated society): Be

less mono-cultural, communicate, visit an Asian country and experience being a minority.

Clearly for Helene Wong from 1979 to 1995 multiculturalism has developed from what the minority needs to do to adjust, to an equal emphasis on what the host community might do to change itself permanently when it invites and accepts migrants.

It is interesting to note that the accommodations between the host and the migrant communities are restricted to social aspects of the interactions and nothing of the next step: the possible interactions at the political and constitutional level. I will try to develop this area after analysing the evolution of the next subject.

WONG LIU SHUENG

Born 1944, Wong

Liu Shueng is currently a policy analyst at the Office of Ethnic Affairs after transferring from the Human Rights Commission. Previously she has worked as a cultural consultant, in tertiary education, undertaken post-graduate study in anthropology and was trained as a teacher.

Dianne and Peter

Beatson published an article in 16 August 1986 issue of The Listener entitled Through the Glass Door based a series of conversations with her.

It is primarily the story of Wong Liu Shueng establishing and re-establishing her identity as a person and as young Chinese woman when she was growing up in the 1960s and 70s.

The year the article was written, 1986, was the year that immigration policy was about to change.

The story is a familiar one to those in the Chinese community in New Zealand: In an earlier generation her parents had grown up in small towns and had separately been sent back to Hong Kong to find someone to marry and instead found each other. Circumstances forced this young couple (Wong Liu Shueng's parents) back to Carterton to look after the family fruit shop and there Wong Liu Shueng was born and grew up.

Wong Liu Shueng tells of the confining social limitations of that community: it was not just Carterton in the 1950s, it was the Chinese: "Even in my generation, if you did not find a wife or husband who was Chinese in New Zealand then, rather than marry out of the cultural group, rather than marry a European, or worst of all (the Chinese are as racist as any race, which is one of the reasons, they remain kind of "pure"), marry a Maori, you were sent home to look for a wife or husband." (A repeat her parents' experience.) So there was a cultural resistance to assimilation by mixed marriages - echoing Helene Wong's story.

She tells of her life as a child labourer working for struggling parents in their business, of the favouritism accorded to males in the traditional Chinese family, and the effect that this kind of upbringing had on her socialisation at school. She partly resolved that by being "clever", diligent and over-achieving in her studies. She spoke of the racism she subjected to by other children and how it affected her.

Wong Lie Shueng married a young Chinese man and finds that he is very traditional and this makes her very unhappy - enough to seek a divorce at the age of 25 years. She then apparently married a European and became a "yellow pakeha". In this role she participated in the whole range of activities but was even more unhappy and lost. "I'd got the state where I really didn't know who I was." Up to then she had an English first name - like most Chinese in New Zealand. Legally changing her name back to her Chinese name and using it only served to alienate her from the Chinese community, who were suspicious of such overt cultural re-engineering.

For Wong Liu

Shueng: "It's like having one room in which you live and which you know terribly well. But there is a glass door through which you can look out into the next room. And you think: I wonder what really goes on out there?" What I've done is open that door and walk right through. And I've closed the door behind me, and tried living a totally European life. But now what I am doing is keeping that door open and I fluctuate in between the two rooms." And she goes on to relate what other things she has done to help resolve her own identity, including sailing a yacht to Hawaii and Alaska, and re-learning her Chinese culture.

Her story is one of a young Chinese woman abandoning her Chineseness and embracing assimilation, only to find it too conflicting in relation to her background and inherited culture.

Her new approach, implied but unvoiced in the article, has been to try integration- to live in both rooms and moving freely between them.

Twelve years later, the same Wong Liu Shueng attends a conference in November 1998 at Otago University.

In her paper *The Changing Face of Chineseness* [18]

Wong Liu Shueng shows that she has largely resolved her earlier identity crisis and angst. In the first sentence she says: "There is a certain joy in being Chinese here in New Zealand at this time. No longer does the place of identity feel like it is a world away. No longer does that sense of a storybook reality exist."

This new feeling has, at least in part, been stimulated by the arrival of the new wave of migrants. She notes that in 1926 there were 4 women living in Hamilton including her grandmother and her own mother but in 1996 there were 81,000 specifically Chinese people in New Zealand. There is a certain safety in numbers perhaps.

She is now clearly aware of multiculturalism: "Minority groups now demand to have their private ethnic selves be enacted in their public lives. I can now go to Auckland War Memorial Museum and realise the contribution of the Chinese pilots of WW2. I can go to Te Papa and see a depiction of Chinese earlier times."

And:
"Because what is happening to Chinese community is happening for other ethnic groups, Maori, Pacific Island peoples, Indians, Pakeha. It is not just a New Zealand trend, it is a world wide trend of celebration of coming out... not from the closet, but from the closed private

doors of our homes when cultural practices were hidden from view."

In 2002, in her paper: *The Moulding of the Silent Immigrants: New Zealand Born Chinese* [19] Wong Liu Shueng, reviews the factors which have shaped the Chinese community in New Zealand and counsels against certain behaviour such as: "not reacting to racism, sometimes even joining in racist behaviour to separate the self from the collective others, or behaving like a model minority, where self alienation becomes expressed as being better than the best, acting in known ways acceptable to the host nation or having to constantly manipulate one's own identity to ensure acceptance" because "these are behaviours of assimilation." Here she has clearly been informed by Beven Yee's PhD research.[20]
 . (This is interesting and new in itself: that commentators within the Chinese community read each other's research!)

One might ask how representative are these two stories of personal development and evolution of ideas. In a sense, not at all representative being only two in an original settler community of some 10-15,000 and that community now only one fourth of the total Chinese community in New Zealand. However, the fact they are illustrated from papers presented in public forums gives them additional weighting and at least a possible claim to being representative - because if they were too atypical they would be challenged.

7. THE POLITICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL DIMENSIONS OF MULTICULTURALISM

We can clearly see that both Helen Wong and Wong Liu Shueng over a period of 15 years each broke free of the assimilation model, found an identity within which they could be comfortable and came to embrace the integration/multicultural model - but the last fully achieved only after the change in the immigration regulations which allowed the Chinese population in New Zealand to triple and then quadruple. Yet right up to the present they have done little to address the political and constitutional dimension of multiculturalism in New Zealand - which is only an observation rather than a criticism. Indeed few ethnically Chinese New Zealanders have done so. The inevitable Google search discloses little if anything. Even constitutional lawyer Mai Chen has apparently yet to apply herself formally to the subject - her sole citation in these matters related to childhood discrimination in *Next* magazine. My own paper[21] in 1998 appears to be among the earliest attempt to introduce the subject to the local Chinese community.

The delay in realising the multicultural model can be adequately explained by the advent of biculturalism, however; this does not explain the absence of the political and constitutional dimensions in ethnic Chinese discourse in New Zealand.

The simple answer may be that the number of people interested in the subject has not reached a critical mass. Even among those expected to have a basic understanding, there is little evidence of a good grasp or at least a willingness to articulate that understanding. Thus Pansy Wong MP in her maiden speech^[22] in Parliament says:

"This time it is also different because of the changes of social attitude in the wider community, the increasing acceptance of the fact that New Zealand is a multi-cultural country. An ideal multi-cultural country is one where social cohesion is achieved because the different groups share the same basic values. In New Zealand, some of these basic values are the right to a fair go, freedom to pursue dreams, compassion and innovation."

But she mentions the word "Maori" only once, perfunctorily:

"New Zealanders of Asian origin appreciate and support the aspirations of the Maori people"

but omits any mention of biculturalism at all, offering instead her own formulation:

"One Nation, Many People, Shared Values."

This is a typical formula used in the Asia communities which generally aspire to a multi-cultural state without addressing the existence of bicultural state, the "inconvenient" Maori people and the rights they have re-gained.

Of course Pansy Wong has a politician's penchant of simplifying complicated issues for mass consumption particularly by her constituents, but even if that were not so, there may be little audience for a full-blown exposition of a multi-cultural state achieved with full recognition of the existing bicultural situation.

That is likely to be the subject of further research and exposition.

[i] Trend leaders rather than people with formal positions in community organisations. Leadership in the Chinese communities was generally hierarchical and based on seniority rather than ability.

[ii] A collaborative on-line encyclopaedia accessed on the internet. All text can be edited by anyone with access.

[1] Steven Young, "Literature Review", NZST 511, Stout Research Centre, VUW, Wellington, September 2005.

[2] Steven Young, Research Essay, Keeping the Yellow Hordes at Bay, NZST 510, Stout Research Centre, VUW, Wellington, June 2005.

[3] Ng Bickleen Fong, The Chinese in New Zealand: a study in assimilation, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, 1959.

[4] Ibid. p7.

[5] Ibid. p7 from Robert E Park, Our racial frontiers on the Pacific, Survey Graphic, 9, May, 1926.

[6] Ibid. p7 from John Lewis Gillin and John Philip Gillin, Cultural Sociology, McMillan, New York, 1948. p505.

[7] Ibid. p7.

[8] Ibid. p7 from John Lewis Gillin and John Philip Gillin, Cultural Sociology, McMillan, New York, 1948. p536.

[9] Ibid. p523.

[10] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_assimilation,
Accessed 16 October 2005.

[11] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racial_integration,
Accessed 16 October 2005.

[12] (3) Ibid. p123.

[13] Stuart William Greif, *The Overseas Chinese in New Zealand*,
Asia Pacific Press, Singapore, 1974.

[14] Charles P Sedgwick, *The Politics of Survival: A Social History of the Chinese in New Zealand*, PhD
thesis, University
of Canterbury, 1982.

[15] (<http://www.aucklandactors.co.nz/ViewFullCV.pl?objectID=299>),
Accessed 15 October 2005.

[16] Personal copy, courtesy of Helene Wong.

[17] Helene Wong Ching Chong
Chinamen: When Friends Become Strangers, 1995 Clinton
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for Peace Studies, Aotearoa / New
Zealand 26 September 1995. (<http://www.stevenyoung.co.nz/chinesevoice/identity/helenewongdec03.htm>)
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[18] Wong Liu Shueng: The Changing
Face of Chineseness Conference
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Change" The University of Otago, Dunedin,
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[19] Wong Liu Shueng The Moulding
of the Silent Immigrants: New Zealand Born Chinese Auckland University of
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Accessed 23 October 2005.

[20] Beven Yee, Enhancing Security:
A Grounded Theory of Chinese Survival in
New Zealand, unpublished PhD thesis,
University of Canterbury,
Christchurch,
2002.

[21] Steven Young The Chinese in a Bicultural New Zealand: The way forward , Conference

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