Title  The Influence of Travel in Formulating Cultural Identity: The Case of the Sarawakian-Chinese

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THE INFLUENCE OF TRAVEL IN FORMULATING CULTURAL IDENTITY:
THE CASE OF THE SARAWAKIAN-CHINESE

CAROLINE TIE CHIN CHING

2009

UNIVERSITY OF BEDFORDSHIRE
THE INFLUENCE OF TRAVEL IN FORMULATING CULTURAL IDENTITY:
THE CASE OF THE SARAWAKIAN-CHINESE

by

CAROLINE TIE CHIN CHING

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
of the University of Bedfordshire

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ABSTRACT

This research study examines the influence of travel and tourism in formulating cultural identity within the Sarawakian-Chinese community, with a special focus on travel to the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the ‘ancestral homeland’. Given the nature of this study, an interpretive paradigm that is informed by the use of a qualitative methodology was employed. In keeping with this research paradigm, interpretive ethnography was utilised to investigate how the Sarawakian-Chinese understand their sense of ‘Chineseness’ based upon their tourism experiences to China. The research enquiry also includes researcher reflexivity as part of the research process, as the identity of the researcher is significant in this study that investigates the identity of her ‘own’ people.

The findings of the research suggest that the Sarawakian-Chinese perceive China as being significant in constructing their ethnic identity. It is also apparent that there is a commonality of being ‘Chinese’, however the extent of this association varies by characteristics of age, education, religion and language. Within this association there is also an element of ‘pick and mix’ of culture, which was observed during the field visit to China, as members of the group evaluated different aspects of Chinese culture. The research study concludes that the experiences of the Sarawakian-Chinese in China highlighted their similarities and differences to the Chinese identity. It is evident that although all Sarawakian-Chinese feel themselves to be at least Chinese in an essentialist context, their degree of ‘Chineseness’ is affected by Sarawak culture, especially religion and education. They also make a clear distinction between Sarawak as ‘home’ and China as the ‘homeland’ with their travel and tourism experiences have served to highlight their sense of hybridity of being Sarawakian-Chinese.
Dedicated to the memory of my grandparents,

Tie Ka-Kiang, Chuo Hee-Ngiik, Lai Swee-Ngik and Ling Cheng-Kong

and a dear friend,

Hilda Hobbs
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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Bedfordshire

It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Name of candidate: Caroline Tie Chin Ching
Date: 1 February 2010

Signature:
CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

The focus of this research is to examine the significance of travel and tourism upon the ethnic identity of the Sarawakian-Chinese community living in Kuching (Sarawak, Malaysia) with particular reference to (return) visits to China. The Chinese that are living in Kuching city are the descendents of 19th century emigrants from China to Southeast Asia (Reid, 1996; Skeldon, 2003). According to Skeldon (2003), the early migration of Chinese people during this period to Southeast Asia was ‘diasporic’, with communities being established in different countries who maintained their links with their homeland. Safran (1991) argues that the diaspora live in hope that these links may subsequently lead them back to their ancestral homeland where they belong.

Several studies have indicated that Chinese migration in the early nineteenth century was due to various factors. Wars and famine within the country drove many abroad, and the dire need for cheap labour in foreign lands opened up opportunities for China’s poor (Pan, 1999; Wang, 1991; Wang, 1994). The Chinese migrants who migrated to Sarawak pre-dominantly originated from rural South-east China and they arrived in Sarawak in the mid 1800s. However, the physical separation of many Chinese from their ‘home’ has not precluded the continuity of a home-oriented identity (Wu, 1994). Historically, no self-respecting Chinese would leave home permanently, instead travelling as a sojourner. According to Skeldon (2003), a sojourner does not wish to assimilate into the dominant society because it is believed that by maintaining their home-oriented identity, they can assimilate back into their own society upon their return. On the contrary, the history of Chinese migration has shown that not only has the Chinese community been scattered across different continents, it has also shed off the sojourning mentality as it became more established and integrated to differing degrees into the host society (see Chen, 2004; Kibria, 2003; Louie, 2004).
As relations with the host society in Sarawak became more established and whilst Communist China remained politically isolated from 1949 to 1978, the opportunities and necessities for maintaining contacts with the homeland were progressively reduced (Chen, 2004). During this period of disconnection and relative isolation from China, Tu (1991a) observes the Chinese diaspora not only established relations with the host society but they also acquired a local Chinese consciousness. Following Chairman Deng Xiao-Ping’s ‘reform and opening’ policy in 1978, China permitted emigrants to visit their homeland if they desired under the ‘Open Door’ policy. Since then, many Sarawakian-Chinese have taken the opportunities to (return) visit to their ancestral homeland. Therefore, the aim of this research is to critically evaluate the significance of travel and tourism to China upon the identity of the Sarawakian-Chinese.

Given that many Chinese diaspora have focused their attention towards cultivating connections with mainstream society and have since established themselves in Sarawak, this process of connections challenge Safran’s (1991: p.83) notion of diaspora that regards the ancestral homeland as their ‘true and ideal home’. Therefore, this research study also seeks to analyse how the various understandings of ‘home’ are constructed through time and space by the Sarawakian-Chinese.

Apart from examining the significance of travel and tourism of the Sarawakian-Chinese to their ancestral homeland in China, this research also looks into the wider scope of travel experiences of the Sarawakian-Chinese. It explores how the meaning and significance of tourism are defined by this community and thereby seeks to understand their motivations for participating in tourism. Whilst tourism has become increasingly significant to many Sarawakian-Chinese, there are also
those who may not find travel and tourism easily accessible. Therefore, this research study also seeks to identify and investigate why some Sarawakian-Chinese are inhibited from participating in travel and tourism.

1.2 Research aim and objectives
The aim of this research is to understand how travel and tourism influences the identity of the Sarawakian-Chinese community.

The objectives are to:

a) understand the significance of travel and tourism for the Sarawakian-Chinese community;
b) comprehend how travel to the People’s Republic of China (PRC) influences identity formation;
c) analyse the construction and meaning of ‘home’; and
d) identify and investigate barriers to tourism participation.

1.3 Theoretical and conceptual framework
The theoretical stance of this thesis is that identity, including Chinese ethnicity, is an imagined and socially constructed identity. It also posits that Chinese identity is conditioned through a process of relational positioning concerned with categories of self-identification and social ascription. Since their settlement in Sarawak and amidst the political turmoil in China in 1949, the Chinese in Sarawak have established a basis for community and identity formation by demonstrating their historical roles in Sarawak’s nation building. Despite three generations of Chinese community in Sarawak, ‘Chineseness’ is still a significant part of their identity. However, in his study of Chinese community, Tan (1990) argues that there is no common Chinese culture for Chinese everywhere because a local consciousness has been acquired. Each Chinese society conceptualises their own ‘Chineseness’ by incorporating the languages and cultures of the host society which are invariably different from Chinese communities elsewhere (Wu, 1994).
In other words, a person of Chinese descent living in Sarawak would negotiate practices of ‘Chineseness’ in ways that are quite different to another who lives in China or in another geography of diaspora. Therefore, identity as such is socially specific and is maintained under specific socio-historical conditions.

The migration of the Chinese from China to Sarawak in the 19th century was characterised by Skeldon (2003) as ‘diasporic’ (characteristics of diaspora are reviewed in Section 3.3). Given that diaspora are all populations living outside their ancestral homelands (Butler, 2001; Schnapper, 1999; Shuval, 2000), the Chinese community in Sarawak may be understood as being a ‘diasporic community’.

As a consequence of people being voluntarily or forcibly displaced from their original homeland, the theory of the discourse of diaspora argues that they will not find ‘home’ in places other than their own homeland. According to Falzon (2004: p.89) whilst the diaspora may be ‘unstuck’ physically from their home, they rest emotionally ‘stuck’ to it. The analogy used by Said (1994: p.59) to explain this state of being is as: ‘a shipwrecked person who learns how to live in a certain sense with the land, but not on it.’ Said (ibid.) suggests that diaspora: ‘exist[ing] in a median state, neither completely at one with the new setting nor fully disencumbered of the old, beset with half-involvements and half-detachments, nostalgic and sentimental on one level, an adept mimic or a secret outcast on another.’

As much as reference to homeland is significant in forming the identity of diasporic communities, Morley and Robins (1995: p.8) argue that the over-emphasis of homeland as a point of reference of identity construction, is arguably a discourse that promotes ‘the absolutism of the pure’ (Section 3.3.4). Indeed, several scholars have de-emphasied homeland orientation (Anthias, 1998; Clifford, 1997; Falzon, 2003), suggesting that other locations could be just as important in
identity formation as places of return. In this case, the focus shifts from implying ‘roots’ as a fixed location to ‘routes’, centred upon mobile and trans-cultural geographies of home (Clifford, 1997; Gilroy, 1993). Additionally, several authors have also argued that identity of a diaspora is not bound by homeland influences but by cultural, social, political and economic conditions of the host countries (Kostovicova and Prestreshi, 2003; Ramji, 2006; Sorenson, 1996). Therefore diasporic identity does not necessarily portray solely a reflection of homeland identity but is influenced by the identities of the nation of settlement.

Many diasporic communities maintain active linkages between their societies of origin and settlement (Glick Schiller et al., 1992), and are consequently enmeshed in their own community but also attuned to the dominant culture, living in a state of constant flux between the two (further discussion on these linkages is examined in Section 3.3.3). ‘Marginality’, ‘cultural clashes’ and ‘living in two worlds’ are some of the themes that highlight experiences of diasporas (Ang, 2001; Kibria, 2003). Several studies have now emerged that propose interpreting diasporic identities as being hybridized (Featherstone, 1996; Friedman, 1999; Nurse, 1999). Diaspora and their successive generations have become ‘undecidedly mixed’ (Young, 1995: p.1) with the host identity and dwell in a space where their identity continues to be negotiated, transformed and rearticulated (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha (1990) also defined this space as the ‘third space’, which is a space of hybridity, a concept which is discussed in Section 3.4.

Linked to the understanding of ‘diaspora’ and ‘hybridity’ is the concept of ‘home’, which is explored not purely as a physical locality where people live, but also as a place of experiences, meanings and feelings. Traditionally, the term ‘home’ was synonymous with ‘homeland’ which is referred to as the locale of one’s birth (Kaiser, 2002; Weber, 1976). However, since people have become more mobile and more people are living outside their homeland, the meaning of home has also become more complex and ‘pluri-local’ (Rapport and Dawson, 1998; Rouse, 1991). It can subsequently be argued that the concept of home is no longer bound or constrained by local condition but is ‘liberated from local ways of life, community mores, and parochial society’
In this instance, links between ‘diasporas’, ‘home’ and ‘homeland’ are often fraught with tensions and ambivalence (these tensions and ambivalence are discussed in Section 3.3.1).

In summary, the concepts of ‘diaspora’, ‘hybridity’ and ‘home’ are taken as being central to understanding identity formation, as illustrated in Figure 1. It is proposed that concepts of ‘diaspora’, ‘hybridity’ and ‘home’ are constantly interacting with each other in the process of formulating identity.

Figure 1: Theoretical and conceptual framework of identity formation

1.4 Significance of the study
Over the past half century, tourism has emerged as a central component of contemporary modernised societies. As more people achieve the freedom to travel, the scale and scope of tourism have grown inexorably. Given that tourism’s global economic contribution has become increasingly significant, many studies are devoted to analysis of the economic aspects and theories of tourism. However, one could also argue that the nature of tourism is not just an
economic phenomenon but as a complex set of social and cultural phenomena. Therefore it
would be an error to trivialise the social and cultural significance of tourism as a phenomenon
(Franklin, 2003). Nevertheless, the application of the social sciences to the investigation of
tourism is continually and relatively weak compared to other areas of social inquiry (Holden,
2005). This study is subsequently investigated within the context of social and cultural
significance of travel and tourism amongst the Sarawakian-Chinese community.

In exploring the phenomena of travel and tourism, it is argued that tourism is commonly defined
from a western perspective, with a limited understanding of the meaning and significance of
tourism in other cultures. Within tourism studies there are a very limited number of research
projects that examine different ethnic groups experiences and understanding of tourism. This
research contributes to the understanding of meanings and experiences of tourism amongst the
ethnic Sarawakian-Chinese community, whilst also seeking to enhance the understanding of
tourism participation amongst the wider non-white communities.

While travel and tourism have become an integral part of modernised societies, there are still
those who do not travel and/or actively engage in tourism. Holden (2005) has listed a lack of
income, combined with social prejudices such as racism and homophobia, as some of the
barriers to participating in tourism. Lower-socio-economic groups are less likely to take holidays
because they lack disposable income to be able to participate in tourism (Seaton, 1992; Shaw
and Williams, 2002). Besides lack of income, some destinations are also less ‘welcoming’
towards those who are classified as different. For example, since the attack on the Twin Towers
in New York on 11 September, 2001, Muslim communities have sometimes been the target of
racial abuse from immigration officials and aviation authorities (Wazir, 2001).
Apart from the Muslim communities, other marginalised groups such as gay people are also facing discrimination. Some destinations prohibit homosexual holiday makers from participating in tourism activities in their regions (Want, 2002). Marginalised and minority communities or groups may be restricted from participating in travel and tourism because of their religion and lifestyle choices. Significantly, understanding the barriers to tourism participation amongst the marginalised is an area of research that need to be further developed. This research critically analyses the barriers of tourism participation amongst the Sarawakian-Chinese community.

Whilst there may be a scarcity of literature exploring the significance of travel and tourism amongst Chinese diaspora, studies of Chinese migration and historical perspectives on Chinese migration to many parts of the world are well documented (Campbell, 1971; Pan, 1999; Poston et al., 1994; Wen, 1985; Wickberg, 1994; Reid, 1996; Benton and Pieké, 1998). Some of these studies also explore the changing identity of the Chinese community in host nations (see Ang, 1994; Armstrong and Armstrong, 2001; Ma and Cartier, 2003; Tong and Chan, 2001; Nyíri, 1997; Charney et al., 2003; Tsai et al., 2000; Wang, 1994; Wang, 1991; Wong, 1997; Yang, 1994; Kibria, 2003). Furthermore, these studies have explored the dynamics of identity and adaptation within the Chinese community in their new environment.

However, only one research study has extensively focused on the travel experiences of overseas-born Chinese, particularly documenting their travel experiences to their homeland village in China. Louise’s (2004) work involved exploring interactions between the American-Chinese and their ancestral homeland through the ‘In Search of Roots’ programme (further discussion on this programme is examined in Section 4.2). This programme was designed to take young Chinese American adults of Cantonese descent to visit their ancestral villages in China’s Guangdong province. Through ethnographic interviews and observations, Louie (ibid.) examined their experiences both during village visits in China and following their participation in the program, which she herself took part in as an intern and researcher.
Louie’s (ibid) experiences and the experiences of her subjects have given pertinent insights for this study. However, taking Hall’s (1996) argument that: ‘identity is the product of historical development, and is constantly in process, characterised by change and transformation’ (ibid.: p.4), it is surmised that not all Chinese are subjected to the same ‘historical development’, and therefore the transformation of each Chinese identity would be different from one another. This research seeks to subsequently unpack the complex meanings of ‘Chineseness’ as Sarawakian-Chinese participate in travel and tourism to their ancestral homeland. It investigates both the self-identity of the Chinese and how they identify the ‘other’ Chinese in China.

In the context of Chinese diaspora, Wang (1999) stresses that the study of diaspora should avoid labelling them as a homogenous group of people who live in the margins, but should emphasise “the difference and diversity within the diaspora in order to open up the perspective of a diasporic pluralism, one that recognises that there are ‘many kinds of Chinese’, even ‘many different Chinese diaspora’” (ibid.: p.17), variously settled in and oriented towards their new countries of residence. The Chinese communities around the world have become more heterogeneous divided by language, origin, political persuasion, class and legal status (Benton and Pieke, 1998; Chen, 1992; Wong, 1997) and within this heterogeneity, new ethnicities and identities are being manufactured (Kwong, 1997).

Thus the identity of the Sarawakian-Chinese may not necessarily reflect the identity of the Chinese diaspora settling in other nations. Additionally, the process of migration and settlement could have different implications upon identity formation for different groups. Therefore, the negotiation of a ‘new’ identity with an ‘old’ identity merits consideration, particularly when many Sarawakian-Chinese are participating in travel and tourism to visit their ancestral homeland. This study also investigates issues of identity and reflexivity, making a subsequent contribution to the
debate of understanding identity as being subjective and reflexive, a discussion that is presently very limited in current tourism studies.

This research also contributes to how knowledge of a particular landscape, i.e. China, is constructed, reconstructed, contested and changed in order to fit the narrative of a life story. Specifically, it explores the meanings of ‘home’ and how the sense of ‘home’ is formulated in successive generations. It is often taken for granted that homeland is the point of reference for many diasporic communities and that successive generation would continue to have the same emotional attachment towards their homeland as their ancestors. This research sought to de-mystify the ‘myth of return’ amongst Chinese diaspora in Sarawak and to re-construct their concepts of ‘homeland’ and ‘home’ across the generations.

Several tourism studies have now emerged that investigate the phenomenon of diasporic communities visiting their homelands (see Ali and Holden, 2006; Kang and Page, 2000; Nguyen and King, 1998; Feng and Page, 2000; Stephenson, 2002). However, most of this literature is not explicit in classifying such phenomenon as ‘homeland tourism’ but rather it is subsumed under the study of ‘ethnic tourism’ (Kang and Page, 2000; Nguyen and King, 1998); ‘ethnic reunion’ (Feng and Page, 2000; Stephenson, 2002); ‘Visiting Friends and Relatives’ (Seaton and Tagg, 1995); ‘return migration’ (Duval, 2003; Williams and Hall, 2002); and ‘return visits’ (Baldassar, 2001). In all these studies there are strong indications that the departed have maintained connections with their relatives and friends in the homeland, particularly with their visits to the home village. These studies have not emphasised or investigated experiences that are beyond any blood-tie connections. This research on the other hand included experiences of those who have since disconnected from their relatives in China and for whom yet China remains significant to their identity formation.
1.5 Overview of methodology

Based upon the need to develop rich understandings of Sarawakian-Chinese travel experiences, particularly to the homeland, and the cultural familiarity and language abilities of the researcher, an interpretive ethnographic approach has been used in this research study. The methodological approach to this study is set in the context of meeting its aim and objectives, hence philosophical and practical considerations have been taken into account, to achieve an ontologically sound and workable methodology. An interpretive approach utilising qualitative research methods seemed most appropriate, since this is commonly used in ethnographic studies of culture, travel and tourism (Bruner, 1995; Geertz, 1973). Within this framing, it was deemed that an inductive approach characterised by semi-structured interviews and participant-observation were appropriate to this research.

A body of trusted interviewees was established during the ‘pilot study’ carried out over a period of three weeks in August 2005. These trusted acquaintances subsequently introduced their friends and relatives to participate in the ‘main’ interviews conducted in three stages. The first stage was during a period of four months from September 2005 to January 2006; the second stage was carried out eleven months later for three weeks; and the last stage was conducted in February 2008 for a period of three weeks. A total of 45 individuals participated in the interviews. This method of ‘snowball sampling’ proved to be a suitable method for contacting people who were thought to be relevant to the research, not least because the Chinese community is ‘close-knit’, and thus having gate-keepers helped to gain trust from the subjects. The second main research method utilised participant-observation with a tour group of Sarawakian-Chinese on a 9-day visit to China during October 2005. The aim of the fieldwork in China was to observe the behaviour of Sarawakian-Chinese tourists engaging in tourism activities within a ‘natural situation’.

Alongside the researching of ‘others’ in the field, emphasis is also placed on reflecting upon the researcher’s own experiences and identity during the fieldwork. It is inevitable that the
researcher’s personal biography and cultural background play a significant role in shaping the way in which the phenomenon being studied is interpreted and constructed (Jamal and Hollinshead, 2001). It is therefore important that the researcher engages in the process of self-examination throughout the research and produces reflexive accounts of her own experiences in the field. The reflexive journal of the researcher is recorded in Chapter Nine.

1.6 Summary of the thesis

The thesis is presented in nine chapters. Chapter One, i.e. this one explains the purpose, background and significance of the thesis. It outlines the theoretical and conceptual framework of the research, emphasising the concepts of ‘diaspora’, ‘hybridity’ and ‘home’ which are central to the understanding of identity formation. The interpretive ethnographic approach and qualitative methodology of the study is also introduced.

Chapter Two begins with an introduction of the characteristics of the research population and location relevant to this study. It reviews the migration history of the Chinese people since the 1800s and maps the different Chinese identities in Sarawak through historical periods – from British colonial rule to post independence of the new Malaysian state. This chapter demonstrates the dynamic relationships between the Chinese community and the host society and subsequently, the relationships with their ancestral homeland. It gives a contextualised background of how the Chinese became more localised in forming their ethnic identity in Sarawak.

Chapters Three and Four are centred upon an analytical review of the relevant literature and cover various theoretical perspectives relating to the subject of the study. Chapter Three focuses on the key concepts of ‘diaspora’, ‘hybridity’, and ‘home’ and investigates the ambivalence of ‘Chineseness’ based upon essentialist and anti-essentialist discourses. It continues to critically examine different conceptualisations of Chinese identity and evaluates how the identity of the diasporic community becomes hybridised. As the discourse of diaspora assumes an on-going
association between homelands and the departed, homeland orientation is a significant theme for this research. Chapter Four continues the literature review, concentrating upon the relationship between tourism and identity, specifically the role of tourism in identity formation. It also explores the complexities and nuances of the relationship between tourism and diaspora. Finally, it reviews literature that examines the participation of Chinese diaspora and ethnic Chinese communities in tourism.

Chapter Five addresses the philosophical justification of the research approach, exploring the methodology and methods used to conduct this research. This chapter also illustrates the research design and maps out an audit trail of data collection and data analysis. It discusses the techniques incorporated within the study to ensure trustworthiness based on credibility, transferability, dependability and reflexivity.

Chapter Six and Seven present the main interpretive ethnographic findings that emerged from the study. Given the wealth and richness of the data collected, it is necessary to spread the findings into two chapters. Chapter Six explores the significance of travel and tourism amongst the Sarawakian-Chinese community and the barriers encountered in tourism mobilities. This chapter also analyses the motivations of the Sarawakian-Chinese for visiting their ancestral homeland, based upon the themes that emerged from their ethnographic accounts. Chapter Seven elaborates how these motivations led them to experience China and their constructions of the concept of ‘home’ and ‘homeland’. The chapter ends by illustrating the significance of these visits in relation to their identity negotiation.

Chapter Eight relates the findings of this research to the key concepts and existing research of the literature review discussed in Chapters Three and Four. Subsequently, the themes that emerged from the ethnographic accounts in Chapter Six and Seven are related to the theories and concepts discussed in the literature review. The chapter also highlights the contribution of
this research to tourism studies, whilst also presenting the considered limitations of the research study.

Chapter Nine provides explanations of the main findings, and identifies the directions for future tourism research agendas. It also provides descriptions of the reflexive accounts of the researcher’s identity and considers issues of her identity in the research process. This research is not just about investigating the identities of the Sarawakian-Chinese but is also a process of self-examination in which the researcher becomes the subject of her own investigation.
CHAPTER TWO:

THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN SARAWAK

This chapter:

- contextualises the historical background of Chinese migration and Chinese settlement in Sarawak;

- evaluates the changing relations of the host society with China; and

- considers the transformation of a Chinese diasporic community towards a hyphenated-community.

2.1 The research population and location

The focus of this research is the Chinese diasporic community residing in Kuching, located in the South West of Sarawak. Sarawak is situated on the island of Borneo and is one of the thirteen states of Malaysia, shown in Figure 2, and since Independence the Chinese have been the second largest minority population in the state. According to the 2004 Census, the Chinese ethnic minority represents twenty-seven per cent of the total population of 2,185,700 in Sarawak (Department of Statistics, Sarawak, 2004), with thirty-seven per cent of them living in Kuching city (ibid.).
2.2 The migration and settlement process

The first group of Chinese migrants arrived in Sarawak in the mid 1800s, at a time when it was ruled by the Brooke family who originated from England. James Brooke arrived in 1839 and was appointed as the governor of Sarawak by the Sultanate of Brunei in 1841. During their governance, the Brooke family encouraged and facilitated large-scale migration from China to Sarawak for the purpose of economic expansion. The Chinese migrants who relocated to Sarawak pre-dominantly originated from rural South-east China and possessed low levels of education. Despite being encouraged to emigrate, they were typically treated as temporary vis-à-vis permanent residents by the Brooke administration, although they were permitted to establish schools, temples and townships (Armstrong and Armstrong, 2001). However, by the mid-20th century, after one hundred years of imperialism, the political landscapes of Sarawak, Malaysia and China began to change following the Second World War and the advent of the post-colonial era.
As the hold of Britain and other European powers over their colonies began to weaken after the Second World War, China also entered a significant period of political turbulence. Between 1945 and 1949, following the Japanese surrender in China, the Nationalists and Communists began a civil war. As a consequence of the victory of the Communist party and the establishment of the new People’s Republic of China, many Chinese in Malaysia distanced themselves politically and culturally from China, pledging their loyalty to the new post-colonial Malaysian state (Carstens, 2005; Tan, 2001). However, even though the Chinese diaspora tried to re-orientate their identity towards a more localised one, their presence was viewed with suspicion by the local people who considered the Chinese to be communists, consequently posing a potential security risk to their nation (Suryadinata, 1997).

2.3 The emergence of a Chinese diaspora in Sarawak

Since the arrival of the first Chinese immigrants from China, there has been a subsequent four generations of Chinese diaspora in Malaysia and Sarawak. There were approximately 200,000 Chinese diaspora who were registered as being settled in Sarawak after Independence, and their numbers had increased to 578,700 by 2004, as shown in Table 1. According to Wickberg (1994), the first generation migrants saw themselves more as sojourners, as the traditions and expectations of kin in China meant they had responsibility towards those at home. Therefore, they were not expected to settle, but to return to their homeland eventually. However, successive post-independence generations have since shed off this sojourning mentality and become more ‘localised and Malaysianised’ in their identity (Tan 2001: p.215). However, despite their efforts to become more localised, Carstens (2005) argues that being Chinese is still their ascribed identity in Malaysia as it is a social and demographic category determined by birth. This identity is reinforced by the state, for example, every individual of Chinese descent carries with them an Identity Card that specifies their ethnicity (Chun, 1996).
Table 1: Total population by Chinese population in the state of Sarawak, Malaysia (DoSS, 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population in Sarawak</th>
<th>Chinese population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>546,385</td>
<td>145,158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>744,529</td>
<td>229,154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>976,269</td>
<td>293,949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>1,307,582</td>
<td>385,161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1,718,000</td>
<td>475,752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2,008,768</td>
<td>537,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2,185,700</td>
<td>578,700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4 Beyond settlement

In 1957, Peninsular Malaya gained its independence from British rule and in 1963 Sarawak became part of the Federation of Malaya, which was renamed Malaysia. Chinese diaspora in the Malay Peninsula and western Borneo, the geographical areas that comprise Malaysia, have substantially influenced the formation of both colonial Sarawak and postcolonial Sarawakian society. Before and during the British colonial period, Chinese diaspora engaged in a range of economic activities, most notably in the retail economy and as labour for forest clearance schemes to permit the enhancement of plantation agriculture (T’ien, 1953). With the passage of time, the Chinese communities established their own organisations that were characterised by their ethnic identity. By the early twentieth century, these included religious places of worship, i.e. temples and educational institutions, and by the middle of the twentieth century incorporated political parties.
Following Independence, the Malaysian government granted citizenship to all Malaysian-born Chinese, including those born in Sarawak. According to Tan (2001), citizenship encompasses the right of belonging to a nation-state and is a potentially powerful symbol of equality, entitlement and inclusion. Yet, despite gaining citizenship, the Chinese continue to be marginalised, even though citizenship was established primarily on *jus soli* rather than *jus sanguinis* principles (Aquilar, 1999). *Jus soli* is the principle of citizenship when it is acquired by place of birth, i.e. in this case being born in Malaysia, regardless of parental citizenship. By contrast, *jus sanguinis* is the principle of citizenship where it is transferred from the parent, regardless of the territory of birth. In Malaysia, citizenship for the Malays is a matter of right but for the Chinese it remains a matter of privilege because the Malays are considered as *primus inter pares*, the first amongst equals (Tan, 2001). Subsequently, as Tan (ibid.) argues, citizenship for the ethnic Chinese in Malaysia can be interpreted as having only a nominal identity of belonging.

The confused status of the Sarawakian-Chinese is reinforced by the Malaysian Constitution, established by government in 1963. This established Malay as Malaysia’s official language and Islam as its official religion, a reflection of the language and religious characteristics of the Malay majority. As Part XII (153:1 and 2) of the Constitution states:

It shall be the responsibility of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong [the Head of the State] to safeguard the special position of the Malays and natives of any of the States of Sabah and Sarawak and to ensure the reservation for Malays and natives of any of the States of Sabah and Sarawak of such proportion as he may deem reasonable of positions in the public service (other than the public service of a State) and of scholarships, exhibitions and other similar educational or training privileges or special facilities given or accorded by the Federal Government and, when any permit or licence for the operation of any trade or business is required by federal law, then, subject to the provisions of that law and this Article, of such permits and licences.
In effect, the Constitution established special policies to enhance the position of Malays in education, general employment opportunities and capital ownership (Cartier, 2003). The enhancement of opportunities for the Malays over other Malaysian citizens was further strengthened in 1970 through the implementation of the New Economic Policy (NEP) that aimed to eradicate poverty amongst all ethnic Malays. A key component of the policy was increased benefits for poverty-stricken Malays, granting them privileges over other non-Malay citizens, including the establishment of set quotas of representation for public scholarships and employment in the civil service.

Whilst this policy aided the Malays, it simultaneously restricted opportunities for the nation’s minority Chinese and Indian citizens, particularly in the field of public services, public employment and entrance to state-owned universities (Tan, 2001). Consequently, the NEP, now almost four decades old, has caused tensions between the Malays and the non-Malays (ibid.) over the actual and perceived inequalities in opportunities. Although the NEP has subsequently been replaced, most recently by the National Vision Policy of the Third Outline Perspective Plan for 2001–2010, there is a widespread perception that public policy is still dominated by the NEP’s inherent ethnic favouritism, especially regarding wealth redistribution (Jomo, 2004).

Despite the bias of the Malaysian Constitution and NEP toward the majority Malays, the government has an ‘accommodationist’ policy for immigrants, within which minority groups such as the Chinese are permitted to retain constitutions and practices that form their ethnic identity. This includes the establishment of Chinese schools; publication of Chinese newspapers; practising Chinese religions; and developing Chinese cultural institutions. The policy of ‘accommodation’ also incorporates business and commerce, for example, business interests specific to the Chinese community are represented through the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Sarawak Chinese Associations. Politically, the Chinese community also
has a ‘voice’, having representation through political parties such as the Sarawak United People’s Party (SUPP), which now also incorporates other ethnic groups besides the Chinese.

### 2.5 Relationships with China

Whilst the Chinese diaspora was establishing itself in Sarawak, the relationship with the homeland became progressively estranged. Of special significance to this process, was the political turbulence and isolation associated with Communist China from 1949 to 1978, leading to relationships with the homeland being severely inhibited if not completely severed (Chen, 2004). For approximately three decades, the worldwide Chinese diaspora was inhibited from returning to China. Before the Second World War, most Chinese in the Southeast Asia region were politically oriented towards China and many were involved in China-oriented nationalism (see Yen, 1986). However, over a period of three decades, the lack of contact with China is believed to have made the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia ‘less’ Chinese (Suryadinata, 1987). The lack of opportunity to physically connect with China would seem to have resulted in a sensory and relational void that could not be fully bridged by alternative communications.

Following Chairman Deng Xiao-Ping’s reforms and ‘Open Door’ policy in 1978, emigrants were permitted to return to China if they desired. The opening of the Chinese border and the subsequent renewal of contacts between Chinese diasporas and their relatives in China, has led Nyiri (1997) to comment that the Chinese overseas are now reorienting their identity towards China. However, such claims were disputed amongst several scholars (Tan, 2001; Tong and Chan, 2001; Tu, 1991a), who claim that during the three decades of disconnection from China, the identity of the Chinese diaspora and the successive generations has changed. It is argued that they have acquired a local consciousness, which has consequently led their identity to become more heterogeneous and hybridised, a concept which is explored in detail in Section 4.4.
2.6 Chinese identities

As the Chinese settled overseas and become more heterogeneous, many terms have been used to reflect different groups in the Chinese community, including ‘Zhongguoren’, ‘Huaqiao’, ‘Huaren’ and ‘Huayi’. The term ‘Zhongguoren’ or ‘citizens of the Chinese state’ is used to refer to Chinese nationals that live permanently in China. The term carries the connotation of modern patriotism and nationalism, suggesting a sense of connectedness with the fate of China as a nation (Tu, 1994; Wu, 1994). However, as noted by Tu (1994), scholars from mainland China and official pronouncements from Taipei and Beijing, continue to use ‘Zhongguoren’ and ‘huayi’ or ‘Chinese descent’ as a generic term for overseas Chinese. This is even though many overseas Chinese identify themselves as ‘huaren’ rather than ‘zhongguoren’, for they do not consider themselves politically connected to China, having become or desiring to become citizens of other countries (Wen, 1985). Conversely, the Chinese who retain their Chinese nationality while living in other nations called themselves ‘Huaqiao’ or ‘Chinese sojourners’ (Tu, 1994), to differentiate themselves from other Chinese living abroad. The Sarawakian-Chinese community would fall into the category of ‘huaren’ because they are Chinese by descent but they are Malaysian by citizenship.

These terminologies or labels to describe the relationship of the Chinese to China transmit evident political overtones. According to Bourdieu (1991), such naming is a fundamental expression of political power because to name something is to bring it into existence. In this case, it displays a desire by groups to bring terms into existence to denote a differentiation between themselves and others. These terms are imposed from both the ‘inside’ e.g. ‘huaren’ or from the ‘outside’ e.g. ‘huayi’, demonstrating that naming can be seen as representative of either how people see themselves or how others see them. These different terms demonstrate the differences and the complexities of the concept of Chinese identities amongst Chinese communities.
Aiming to provide a comprehensive, panoramic and comparative overview of the Chinese diaspora globally, Pan (1999) in her research on Chinese communities, categorises the Chinese pictorially using four concentric circles as shown in Figure 3. Circle A represents Chinese nationals who live permanently in China, the zhongguoren, as referred to earlier in this section. Circle B represents all the huaqiao, which includes Chinese nationals living and studying abroad; the Chinese who live in Taiwan and who consider themselves as Taiwanese; and the Chinese who live in Hong Kong and who consider themselves as Hong Kong citizens. Those belonging to Circle B may move into circle C and this circle encompasses all the huaren. Pan (ibid.) refers those in circle C as the ‘hyphenated-community’ because they are Chinese by descent but possess non-Chinese citizenship (huaren and huayi) such as the Sarawakian-Chinese. Finally, those Chinese individuals who have assimilated completely into other cultures and cease to acknowledge their Chinese ethnicity, form the outer Circle D.

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1 Hyphenation highlights the crucial duality of ethnicity and citizenship which is imbued in each diasporic community (Hague, 2002). In the context of the Sarawakian-Chinese, the significance of citizenship precedes ethnic identity, but does not imply that the former is more important than the latter. The hyphenation seeks to demarcate this diasporic community as a distinct social group in the host state, while simultaneously distinguishing it from other similar groups scattered in the diaspora but originating from the same homeland.
The making of Sarawakian-Chinese identity

The Chinese community that has settled in Sarawak during the past decades displayed some of the Chinese cultural norms of China. Despite the efforts of especially the first generation to maintain their Chinese culture changes in the cultural framing post settlement, highlight the impact of mainstream Malay society. The following sections examine how the Sarawakian-Chinese negotiate their ethnic identity in the context of familial and social structures, including family, education, language and religion.
2.7.1 Familial and society structure

Similar to many migrants who moved across geopolitical boundaries, the cultural adaptation of Chinese migrants has been shaped in part by inherited cultural norms imported from China (Wickberg, 1994). Central to this were the familial and interpersonal relationship norms associated with Confucianism, including clearly defined roles for family members; along with solidarity and discipline. Chinese immigrants also maintain the core features of their traditional cultural practices including festivals and ceremonies. For example, the Chinese in Sarawak continue to celebrate the Spring Festival which marks the beginning of a new year in the lunar calendar. On the eve of the fifteen days festival, families return to their parents’ home for a reunion feast, with red envelopes containing money being exchanged amongst each other as sign of goodwill. Bad elements from previous year are dispelled by letting off firecrackers, whilst altars are set up at home to give offerings to the gods to bring in wealth and prosperity. These inherited cultural symbols, customs and rituals continue to have appeal to successive generations, although the degree of intensity of how cultural norms and rituals are ‘imposed’ or ‘passed on’, varies between generations and families.

In a desire to maintain a collective identity and arrest the likelihood of the fragmentation and dispersion of family units as a consequence of migration, immigrant Chinese communities have modified their traditional family-based relationship values to develop a system of guanxi or networks, supported by the formation of numerous organised voluntary associations. Such voluntary associations are widespread within overseas Chinese communities, where they often became a type of surrogate extended family or village community. These associations were established on a basis of shared common trade, geographic origin and surname groupings. Subsequently, they usually share similar cultural and social backgrounds (Cohen, 1997), playing a vital role in maintaining links to home villages and extended family members. A further important function of the associations is that by providing a focal and gathering point for the migrants, they help to satisfy their cultural nostalgia for the homeland (Chin, 1981).
For example, the Foochow Association Sarawak is formed by members who speak the Foochow dialect. Each dialect group in Sarawak has its own association and those who speak the same dialect originate from the same geographical region and villages in China. In the past, the main purpose of an association was to promote solidarity and kinship amongst those who originated from the same village. However, post-independence the associations have also a business networking function, through for example the organising of forums for its members. The Foochow Association organises business forums to establish better social networks amongst its members. The Association also carries out social, educational and cultural events for its members, such as organising the annual Spring Festival (or Chinese New Year) to promote Chinese cultural practices and other social gatherings. The Foochow Association and other associations continue to play an important role in maintaining cultural ties for their members.

Subsequent to the foundation of Communist China in 1949 and the Malayan state in 1957, the associations also took on the function of looking after the welfare of the Chinese communities in Sarawak, including the maintaining and promotion of Chinese culture and trades. These include exhibitions of Chinese painting and calligraphy, the lion dance, folksong and folkdance performances. In the context of Sarawak, the work of the associations has helped to ensure that key Chinese cultural festivals, including the celebration of Chinese New Year, the observation of the Ghost Festival, and Lantern Festivals, remain important and integral to the culture of the Sarawakian-Chinese community.

### 2.7.2 Education and Language

Prior to independence, the education system in Sarawak comprised of a mix of public sector and religious faith schooling based upon the medium of the English and Chinese languages, which were used for the teaching of all lessons. Post-independence, the Constitution specified that Malay was to be the official national language and also the language of instruction in all schools. The political symbolism of this in a post-colonial Malaysia, was explained by Crystal (2003: p.145) as: ‘when a country becomes independent, there is a natural reaction to leave behind the
linguistic character imposed by its colonial past, and to look for indigenous languages to provide a symbol of nationhood.’ Consequently, in order to create a Malaysian identity, Malay was chosen as the language that would unite a pluralistic society.

The Constitution targeted both English and Chinese medium schools which were required to use Malay as their medium of instruction. As the Chinese view the use of their ‘mother tongue’ as crucial to the preservation of their identity and culture, the change to the Malay language as medium of instruction was perceived to be a significant threat. Subsequently, it was during this period that some Chinese schools decided to become independent, at the cost of receiving no financial or funding support from government. This situation of self-financing Chinese schools operating outside the government system continues to exist today.

While it can be argued that the advocating of a ‘pro-Malay’ policy by the government has forced the Chinese to protect their own interests and to defend their solidarity, the ethnic Chinese are far from united in their political, cultural and economic views. Significantly to this heterogeneity is the process of education, notably a divergence in the chosen medium of education between Malay, Chinese and English (Tan, C. 1990; Tan, L. 1990). Several studies have indicated that education plays a critical role in creating and defining the relationship between the hyphenated-communities and the host country, subsequently redefining identity in the national context (Gundara, 1999; Loewenberg and Wass, 1997; Kostovicova and Prestreshi, 2003). A key aspect of why the medium of education can have a significant impact upon identity formation, is that the Chinese, English and Malay system differ in their values and world-views (Ong, 1999; Parmer, 2001; Tan, 1990). The differences in how people have been educated are important as the Chinese have often been classified according to the medium of instruction they have received (Chiu, 2000; Tan, 1990).
Typically, the Chinese-educated diaspora are more familiar with Chinese civilization, including philosophy, arts, music, culture, ethics and history, than their English-educated counterparts who are more likely to be orientated towards Western philosophy and cultures (Chin, 1981; Parmer, 2001; Tan, 1990). Further, many Chinese individuals who were educated in English medium schools perceive themselves to be superior to their Chinese-educated counterparts. Meerwald (2002) explains this hegemonic sentiment as a consequence of colonialism which established English as the language of the powerful. Therefore, having a colonial or English education was thus seen as ‘contributing to a privileged position in society, as one was virtually equated to a Westerner and thus an empire-builder, with access to professional employment and a higher socioeconomic status’ (Meewald, 2002: p.298).

Being educated in another language is symbolic of the breaking of ties with China to an extent. It can be argued that the English-educated Chinese perceive they have less in common with China than the Chinese-educated Chinese but they are not ‘white’ enough to be British. Thus, being twice-removed from their Chinese roots through the processes of migration and education, has created a sense that they are neither ‘purely Chinese culturally nor European by heritage’ (Koh, 1998: p.158). Additionally, the Chinese who cannot speak Mandarin are often perceived by those who can speak it as being ‘westernised’, an accusation based upon an essentialisation of language to ethnicity and cultural identity (ibid. 1998). This separation of ‘us’ and ‘them’, reinforces differences within the community emphasising the presence of various sub-cultures based upon identity.

While English-medium schools have produced generations of Sarawakian-Chinese who are ‘Chinese at heart but British by thinking’ (Ong, 1999), those who attended Malay-medium schools are thought to be at least ‘partially assimilated’ (Parmer, 2001: p.51) into the Malay culture. However, no research was found that categorised the orientation of the identity of the Sarawakian-Chinese who have attended Malay mediums schools. In summary, the use of
language in education would seem to be a significant contributor to the reconfiguration of Chinese identity in Sarawak.

As a consequence of changing educational policies post Independence, most Chinese families speak a mixture of Mandarin, English and dialects in their everyday conversation within their family milieu. A common pattern of education within the community is for parents to enrol their children in Chinese-medium primary schools to give them a good foundation in the Mandarin language. After six-years of primary schooling, these children then graduate into English-, Chinese- or Malay-medium secondary schools.

Another important factor in shaping identity is the language spoken in the home, for example there are Sarawakian-Chinese who attended English- or Malay-medium schools but grow up in a Chinese-speaking family. There are also English-educated Sarawakian-Chinese who are socialised in English-speaking families and their subsequent knowledge of Mandarin and their own dialects is usually limited. However, the loss of the use of Chinese language does not necessarily diminish the wish to identify oneself as Chinese (Wang, 1994). As for the Sarawakian-Chinese who are Malay-educated, the ability to read and write Malay does not mean that the Sarawakian-Chinese will speak Malay regularly among themselves (Tan, 1990). Although three distinct typologies of educated Sarawakian-Chinese are evident, i.e. English-, Chinese- and Malay-educated, there are also hybrid models and patterns of educational experiences, for example a person may attend a Chinese primary school and proceed to the English or Malay secondary schools. Similarly, the ethnic and cultural inheritance of the Sarawak-Chinese, means that it is not untypical to have both the Chinese and English languages routinely spoken at home.
2.7.3 Religious Syncretism

After Sarawak became part of the Federation of Malaya in 1963, Islam was adopted as the national religion, as referred to in Section 2.4. However, under the Constitution, the Sarawakian-Chinese are permitted to practise their own religions, with many of them continuing to follow Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism and Christianity, whilst a small percentage has embraced the Islamic faith.

The Chinese community in Sarawak embraces two main types of inherited religions: (i) traditional organised religions with their independent theology, symbols and rituals, including Buddhism and Taoism; and (ii) cultural belief systems that include ancestor worship. Both Buddhism and Taoism are the traditional religions of the Chinese and were imported into Sarawak with immigration. Commonly, the Sarawakian-Chinese community practised an amalgam of Buddhism and Taoism, known as Baishen, which also encompasses ancestor worship and traditional folklore. Ancestor worship is an essential component of the Sarawakian-Chinese culture, an act of filial piety, translated into rituals that consolidate the collective identity of the family and the clan. Subsequently, this helps to ensure that family social relationships are regularly observed, renewed and affirmed (Wee and Davies, 1998).

Despite the importation of traditional religious and cultural belief systems by the diaspora, Christianity has impacted upon the community. When James Brooke was made governor of Sarawak in the mid-19th century, he permitted the Anglicans, Catholics and Methodists to come as missionaries and construct schools in Sarawak. Many of the Chinese migrants subsequently converted to Christianity and the religion has become very popular among the Sarawakian-Chinese, especially those with higher levels of education. According to Wee and Davis (1999), the significant causal factor underpinning this conversion is that Christianity possesses a higher degree of ‘rationality’ than Chinese traditional religions, which appealed more to the sophisticated sensibilities of some of the educated Sarawakian-Chinese.
The conversion of some of the community to Christianity has resulted in a division of identity. The Sarawakian-Chinese that have converted to Christianity are accused by the non-converted as being ‘westernised’ and ‘decultured’ (DeBernardi, 2001: p.123), as there is a majority view that perceives Christianity as a form of western religion and culture (Meewald, 2002). This conversion to a new faith and implicitly a new culture, has led to an identity crisis between the inherent symbols and values of being Chinese vis-à-vis being western. For example, some of those who were converted to Christianity were required to destroy any household items that bore the dragon image, which in the Chinese culture symbolises blessing and is a good omen, but in Christian teaching is regarded as evil.

In order to conserve an element of Chinese identity within Christianity, Chinese theologians have subsequently proposed a localised Chinese form of Christianity (DeBernardi, 2001). They have called for the Christianising of certain aspects of traditional ancestor worship to allow the Chinese Christians to: ‘preserve their Chinese heritage so that Christianity may not be seen to be a Western religion that destroys all that is Chinese’ (Tong, 1993: p.56). A subsequent move towards religious syncretism was proposed, so that converts to Christianity do not have to become ‘less’ Chinese.

For the many Sarawakian-Chinese who embrace Chinese religions, the Chinese culture is reinforced through religion. Many Chinese festivals such as the Chinese New Year and the Ghost Festival have rituals that are entrenched in Chinese religions. As for those who have converted to other religions, such as Christianity or Islam, although they may continue to observe and celebrate these events, the events are re-interpreted and celebrated only for their cultural values. For example, while most of the Sarawakian-Chinese celebrate Chinese New Year, for which the first day of the celebration requires visits to the temples or worship at altars in the home, the Christians worship in their various churches. It would appear that conversion to non-
Chinese religions has resulted in the Sarawakian-Chinese community becoming less homogenous in terms of having shared cultural values.

2.8 Conclusion

Based upon the discussion and analysis in this chapter it is evident that the Sarawakian-Chinese identity is not homogenous but is influenced by characteristics of politics, education and religion. The origin of the mass migration to Sarawak was the result of James Brookes’ initiative of economic expansion, the intention of the migrants was to return to their homeland. However, a combination of political changes in China and a pro-immigrant colonial policy in Sarawak, encouraged the migrants to stay. Today, the Chinese community is the second largest minority group in Kuching, Sarawak, and into its fourth generation.

The influence of politics on identity can be linked to the post-independence era when the Chinese minority were given citizenship is based upon the *jos soli* principle. Politically, the *huaren* in Sarawak are citizens of Malaysia but culturally they continue to have affinity with Chinese customs and culture. As much as the Malaysian government has tried to build a sense of nationhood by insisting on the use of Malay language and homogenising the education system, their pro-Malay policy on the other hand has contributed to the continued separation of the Chinese from the mainstream and dominant society. As has been discussed in this chapter, this divergence is evidenced through the use of English and Chinese-medium schools, and the practice of traditional Chinese and Christian religions.

As the community has established itself in Sarawak, its relationship with the homeland has become more isolated. The influence of different mediums of education and religions has led to multiple identities. Stuart Hall (1996) articulates that identities in the contemporary epoch are
never unified but are increasingly fragmented. The processes of identity construction and issues of identity are subsequently considered in the next chapter.
CHAPTER THREE:

IDENTITY FORMATION AND ‘CHINESENESS’

This chapter:

1. reviews the main theoretical and conceptual framework relevant to understanding issues of identity;
2. considers the essentialist and anti-essentialist approaches to understanding the dynamic formation of Chinese identity;
3. explores the significance of ‘Chineseness’ as a means to extricate the perplexity of diasporic Chinese identities; and
4. investigates the conceptualisation of home and homeland amongst the hyphenated-community.

3.1 Introduction

Following on the analysis in Chapter Two of the transformation of Chinese identity and exploration of the process of acquiring local Chinese consciousness, this chapter proceeds to examine the meanings of ‘Chineseness’ for hybrid and diasporic Chinese communities. By drawing upon the concept of hybridity in identity formation, this chapter also seeks to analyse how the diasporic community and their successive generations construe the meanings of ‘home’ and ‘homeland’. In doing so, the purpose is to gain a better understanding of how the phenomenon of travel and tourism influences the multiple identities of the Sarawakian-Chinese, including the significance of return visits to the ancestral homeland of China.

Chapter Two explained the similarities and diversities that exist in Chinese culture within Sarawak, and similarly other Chinese diasporic identities have been moulded by local circumstances in different parts of the world (Ang, 1998). In particular, according to Ang (ibid.) Chinese who were born and lived outside China are influenced by local societies in terms of
historical events and social contexts, subsequently no longer living within the ‘norms’ of the Chinese life. Consequently, what used to be a ‘norm’ of Chinese life is no longer one and new frameworks of reference are needed to understand the complexities of changing cultural identities.

Based on the re-defining of norms, it can be argued that identity is an imagined social construct, maintained through socio-historical traditions and customs. This line of reasoning argues against conceptualizing identity as an essentialist entity and instead re-conceptualises it as being fragmented, uncertain and fluid. Seen in this context, it may be argued that there is no one form of ‘Chineseness’ and neither is ‘Chineseness’ an inert fact of nature, but the formation of Chinese identity is multiply constructed, across different time and place.

3.2 Identity

In the introduction to this chapter it was stated that identity could be understood as a social construct. The following section subsequently reviews two seminal perspectives on cultural identity: essentialism and anti-essentialism, as a framework to understand the dynamic construction of Chinese identity.

3.2.1 Essentialising identity

Essentialism assumes that identity has an essence and therefore it exists as a universal and timeless core of the self which is possessed by all. By this token, identity is conceptualised as having fixed cultural and historical traits which are pre-determined by primordial forces. People recognise who they are by certain fixed qualities that are assumed to be universal and timeless. In the context of conceptualising ethnic identity based on an essentialist notion, people who belong to the same ethnicity would share a common and distinctive descent, culture and history (Haslam et al., 2000; Rothbart and Taylor, 1992).
In the context of the Chinese diaspora this would include all the *huaqiao*, *huaren* and *huayi*. Proponents of this concept argue that these groups have an essence which identifies them as similar to the *zhungguoren*. Balibar (1991) remarks the idea of being part of the same ethnicity is to produce a sense of belonging based on naturalised and reiterating fictive notions of kinship and heredity. From this perspective, ethnicity is a product of natural and biological phenomenon, i.e. given at birth (Connor, 1978; Isaacs, 1975).

Proponents of essentialism argue that there is only one form of Chinese identity. The meaning of being Chinese is to have similar historical, social and cultural experiences regardless of whether they are ‘*Zhongguoren*’, ‘*Huaqiao*’, ‘*Huaren*’ and ‘*Huayi*’. The dragon, the Great Wall and the Yellow River have long been regarded as the symbols of Chinese ancestry and the cradle of Chinese civilisation. Speaking Mandarin and observing the ‘cultural’ code of ethics are also part of the outward characteristics of being Chinese. China meaning the ‘centre of the kingdom’ (*zhungguo*), with its immense geographical size, its 5,000 years of cultural history and its distinctive language, supports a sense of cultural identity for Chinese people. As Tu (1991a:i) explains:

...being Chinese is to belong to a biological line traceable to the Yellow Emperor, being born in the Divine Land, having the ability to speak the language and hence participate in the Chinese linguistic world; being Chinese also implies the practice of a code of ethics towards one’s homeland the mother country.

The typical characteristics of being Chinese are thus belonging to an established race of long history, speaking the Chinese language and practicing rituals of Chinese culture. In an essentialist sense, as long as the people with Chinese backgrounds can claim: a male Chinese ancestor; an ancestor’s birthplace in China; or practice some form of Chinese culture, they remain Chinese (Wu, 1994). Consequently, Chen (2002: p.1) argues that: ‘being Chinese carries with it the expectations beyond the physical. It is a complete package: linguistic, historical,
psychological as well as physical. In other words, it is both a natural and biological phenomenon to be Chinese.’

3.2.2 Critiques of essentialising identity

The problem with this traditional sinocentric view of ‘Chineseness’ is that it focuses on essentialising it to one specific geographical area (Wang, 1991), with the Chinese people at the centre of existence whilst other peoples are cast into the periphery (Wu, 1994). Many huaqiao and huaren continue to view China as the reference point of all things Chinese and therefore China is the centre where they structure their existence and identity. These inherent characteristics of ‘Chineseness’ remain static despite changes to one’s context geographically, historically, socially and politically. Subsequently, regardless of where one is born, a person of Chinese descent including the Sarawakian-Chinese, would share similar character traits with those in China.

This single homogenous point of view was criticised by Chambers (1994) as being established through the construction of an ‘imaginary community’, a sense of belonging that is sustained by fantasy and imagination. The essentialist view assumes that Chinese identity is fixed and consistent as it is based on blood and part of origin. This thesis has increasingly been contested as it ignores historical and social changes, whilst neglecting internal differences within a group (Moya, 2000). Such differences include the different ethnic minority groups found in China, emphasising that Chinese people and Chinese cultures were never a homogenous group.

The concept of a unified Chinese identity is a modern one that emerged at the turn of the twentieth century. The original term of Zhonghua minzu or the ‘Chinese race’, first appeared in nationalistic writings in the early 1900 to unify Chinese people in the north of the country against Western invasion (Wu, 1994). However, efforts were later made through intellectual discourses
and government promotions to use the term to encapsulate all Chinese groups and construct a unified Chinese identity (ibid.). Thus, a homogenous Chinese identity can be seen as a socially constructed concept attempting to organise diverse groups into an ‘imagined community’, conditioned through a process of relational positioning against Western ‘others’.

In an effort to challenge the traditional, centrist and essentialist conceptions of Chinese culture and identity, Tu (1991b), the Professor of Chinese history and philosophy at Harvard University, tried to de-centre China as the centre for all things Chinese. He reasons that the discourse of Chinese culture is in fact shaped increasingly by the diaspora living in the periphery outside China, such as the huaqiao and huaren, rather than by those living in mainland China. The experiences and consequent conceptualisation of the huaqiao and huaren cannot be undermined, and Tu (ibid.) recognises the fluidity of ‘Chineseness’ as opening new possibilities and avenues of inquiry. Fluidity is symbolic to a cultural space called ‘cultural China’, in which space “encompasses and transcends the ethnic, territorial, linguistic and religious boundaries that normally define ‘Chineseness’” (ibid.: 1991). In Tu’s (ibid.) paradigm of fluidity, the essentialist version of conceptualising identity becomes problematic, as it is not adequate to explain the differences of identity that are constructed in diasporic spaces.

3.2.3 Anti-essentialising identity

As the antithesis of essentialism, anti-essentialism is an alternative approach to conceptualising identity, particularly in explaining the changing identity of the huaqiao and huaren living outside China (see Section 2.6). It recognises that the Chinese living in the peripheries often interpret being Chinese in their own way, an identity that does not subscribe to the norms of the essential Chinese subject (Ang, 1998). Anti-essentialism argues that essentialism is inadequate for defining the changing nature of identity in response to global forces. Subsequently, a new perspective is necessary to understand the complex nature of shifting cultural identities. The fluid movements of identity in a globalised world are seen as a journey that is often open and
incomplete, in which there is no fixed identity (Chambers, 1994). Anti-essentialism recognises that identity is continuously changing and is open to rerouting, rewriting and questioning. As such the construction of identity is seen as a hybrid process where identity becomes a flexible zone, opening up multiple discourses (Mathews, 2000) and influences.

Since the late 1960s, as more Chinese have been born in the peripheries and subjected to the influences of their respective diasporic countries, the meanings of being Chinese have had to be re-examined. This notion of a static ‘Chineseness’ as originating from China is clearly problematic when applied generally to the community, given the diversity of ethnicity, religion, language, territory and even nationality. None of the terms presented in previous sections could adequately describe the heterogeneous composition of the people with Chinese backgrounds. Today the meanings of ‘Chineseness’ are as complex and vague as are the diasporic people with Chinese backgrounds. For example, a person of Chinese descent living in America, may negotiate practices of ‘Chineseness’ in ways that are quite different to another who lives in Australia. Likewise, a Chinese person in Sarawak would not necessarily define their sense of ‘Chineseness’ as would a Chinese person living in China.

Chinese identity, including the identity of the Sarawakian-Chinese, is therefore likely to be different from the one imagined in China as a consequence of the cultural, social, political and economic forces operating in the state of immigration. Thus, the meaning of ‘Chineseness’ of these diasporic communities is subject to change in each locality, with ethnic Chinese communities developing distinct local consciousneses in different parts of the world. For example, the Chinese community living in the northern state of Kelantan in Malaysia, are fluent in Kelantanese Malay and have developed a type of creolised Baba culture (Winzeler, 1985).
3.2.4 Anti-essentialism versus essentialism

Whilst it is recognised that identity is not fixed and is continually being (re)constructed in different sites of negotiation and moulded by different contexts and circumstances, it also recognises that essentialist ideology is still resonant in many literature (see Tan, 2004). Although the meaning of being Chinese is continually changing, there are still ‘core’ characteristics – ‘the fruits of three thousand years of continuous history’ – embedded in the notions of ‘Chineseness’ today (Wang, 1991: p.3). Chinese people regardless of whether they are *huaqiao* or *huaren* continue to mobilise their identity as a fixed entity. Even Tu’s (1991b) best effort of de-centring China and privileging the periphery is arguably organised within the boundaries of a shared cultural background and common ancestry. According to Ang (1998: p.230), Tu’s concept of privileging the periphery is a discourse that is: ‘motivated by another kind of centrism, this time along a cultural line which is another form of essentialism’, thus shifting the old centre to the periphery. Similar criticism also befalls Pan’s (1999) concentric circle discussed in Section 2.6 where her categorisation of Chinese communities produces a rather homogenous view of the different diasporic groups (see Meerwald, 2002).

Although there is diversity of Chinese cultural practices throughout the world, the emphasis on China as the centre of all things Chinese remains significant. Amongst the Chinese, there is a perpetual fascination with the pure and authentic culture that must originate from China (Ngan, 2007), even though similarities and diversities exist in Chinese identity and Chinese culture. The notion of essentialism continues to resonate because of the concept of an imagined community has the ability to create a sense of unity and solidarity amongst the *huaqiao* and *huaren* (see Gilroy, 2004). This solidarity gives the *huaqiao* and *huaren* a sense of belonging to an identity of who they are, as opposed to who they are not.
3.2.5  Identity as relational

A further concept of identity is that it is relationally positioned signifying the importance of the ‘other’ in identity formation. An awareness of difference in the ‘other’ may be a prerequisite for the definition of individual and collective identity. From this perspective, ‘identity has to go through the eye of the ‘other’ before it can construct itself’ (Hall, 1996: p.89). However, this form of conceptualisation is not without its problems because the demarcation between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is often embedded in the concept of essentialism. Ethnic groups often use their differences to enhance their sense of distinctiveness for purposes of identification, thus character traits are often regarded as objective elements, used to distinguish one group from another. As Barth (1969: p.13) remarks, ‘membership of an ethnic group therefore implies having a basic identity and the claim to judge and be judged by standards relevant to that reality.’ People can therefore identify a person of Chinese background because of certain predefined markers which identify them as different to ‘others’.

It is subsequently possible to conceptualise identity as being shifting and situational in relation to others. A person’s identity may vary depending on the function and context of the questions posed to it, a type of relational positioning between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ (Ngan, 2007). Identities evolve through interactions and therefore are always in a state of being reconstructed and reshaped. Thus, for the purpose of this study, identity is conceptualised as a social construct that is conditioned through self-description and social ascription. Whilst the huaqiao and huaren have often lived away from China for generations, and have formed a sense of local Chinese consciousness, ‘Chineseness’ remains significant in their construction of ethnic identity because they are continually bound to a common imagined Chinese identity (Kuah-Pearce and Davidson, 2008; Kuah-Pearce, 2004; Ma and Cartier, 2003). The following section explores the significance of ‘Chineseness’ as a means to untangle the complicated hybrid identities of diasporic Chinese.
3.3 Diaspora

The etymology of the word ‘diaspora’ originates from the Greek verb *speiro* means ‘to sow’, and the preposition *dia* means ‘over’, with the ancient Greeks using the word to mean migration and colonization (Cohen, 1997: p.ix). Therefore diaspora is a term used to describe people who are dispersed from their original homeland. Safran’s (1991) notion of diaspora from the first issue of the journal Diaspora listed six criteria of a diaspora:

(1) Dispersal from a specific original ‘centre’ to two or more ‘peripheral’, or foreign regions; (2) retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland – its physical location, history and achievements; (3) regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendents would eventually return – when conditions are appropriate; (4) they believe they should collectively be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; (5) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship; (6) they believe they are not or perhaps cannot be fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it (1991: p.83-84).

According to Shuval (2000), the characteristics described by Safran (1991) included: the history of dispersal; myths and memories of the homeland; alienation in the host country; desire for eventual return; ongoing support of the homeland; and a collective identity defined by these relationships. However, Skeldon (1997) observes that the word ‘diaspora’ has been used so much in the academic literature that it has almost displaced the word ‘migration’. The contemporary meaning of diaspora now includes all form of dispersion, displacement and migration (Schnapper, 1999; Tololyan, 1996).

Since the concept of diaspora has been expanded and its meaning reconstructed, ‘diaspora’ is becoming a common term to describe all populations that live outside the homeland (Tololyan, 1991; Butler, 2001; Schnapper, 1999). In his comprehensive examination and categorisation of global diaspora, Cohen (1997) proposes a five-fold typology of diaspora based on experiences.
These include: ‘Victim Diasporas’ such as the Jews, the African diaspora, the Armenians and the Palestinians are typified by their forced and traumatic displacement from a territory; ‘Labour Diasporas’ as exemplified by the Indians under British Rule, arise from economic migration in search of employment; the British are regarded as an ‘Imperial Diaspora’ who re-settled to further their colonial ambitions; ‘Trade Diasporas’ refer to extended networks of merchants, traders and entrepreneurs who carry their goods and services over long distances, e.g. Chinese traders in Southeast Asia and Lebanese merchants in West Africa; and ‘Cultural Diasporas’ which are grounded in the belief of having common ethnic and cultural origins rather than shared historical experiences or a desire to return ‘home’, e.g. the ‘Scottish Diasporas’.

Based upon Cohen’s (1997) typology, many Chinese can be classified as ‘trade diaspora’, since many of them left as traders for the Philippines, Thailand, America, Korea and Southeast Asia in the early twentieth century. However, Cohen (ibid.) also warns that it is not possible to pigeon-hole each diaspora into a specific category because the boundaries between these groups are sometimes blurred. For example, the Chinese diaspora could also be identified as ‘victim diaspora’ because of the dire economic and political situations in China, which forced many of them to leave their country. Equally they could also be classified as ‘labour diaspora’ because they left China in pursuit of work opportunities. Regardless of how they left their country of origin, emotionally, Wang (1999) argues they remained attached to their native place, and many of them dreamed of returning to their home villages after retirement, much like falling leaves would naturally return to the roots of trees.

Chow’s (1993: p.24) term, the ‘myth of consanguinity’ is apt to the self-conception of many Chinese diasporic subjects, as it describes their sense of rootlessness and dislocation in their everyday experiences. It is argued that because China remains entrenched in the lives of Chinese diaspora, primordial sentiment would remain strong among Chinese in the peripheral areas, and therefore they would cherish the hope of returning to the homeland. Consequently, behaviour such as the visit(s) ‘home’ to get married, sending their children back to China for education, or remains in touch with their relatives and friends to be informed of the economic and
political climate at home (Glick, 1980), may be understood as showing identification with their Chinese form of identity.

### 3.3.1 Diaspora and homeland

The discourse of diaspora often assumes an association between homelands and the departed (Falzon, 2003; Safran, 1991) and this association typically takes the form of the retention of collective memories, visions and myths, and a subsequent expectation that the ancestral homeland is where they or future generations will return to (Safran, 1991). Sheffer (1986: p.3) in the description of this association, suggests that diaspora can be understood as: ‘ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin – their homeland.’ Although there are many categories of diasporic communities which have different migration experiences, Cohen (1997: p.ix) maintains that the “old country” – a notion buried deep in language, religion, customs or folklore – always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions.

Homeland is tied to a physical place and subsequently as Rose (1995: p. 47) argues: ‘identity is connected to a place ... by a feeling that you belong to that place. It is a place in which you feel comfortable, or at home, because part of how you define yourself is symbolized by certain qualities of that place.’ As place is significant in formulating identity, scholars have argued that it would be natural for individuals to have emotional attachment to their place of birth, for example to their ‘root’ (Ma, 2003; Sarup, 1996). Since ‘home’ is where families formulate roots and to which individuals are emotionally attached, Safran (1991) concludes that a diaspora’s home is in the place of birth. Basu (2004) argues that home becomes even more poignant in a globalised world of movement, particularly for a diaspora, as it is perceived to be a place where identity can be anchored or relocate to.

According to this discourse, whilst diasporic communities have been formed in many parts of the world, they would not find ‘home’ in places other than their own homeland. Inherent to this
discourse is the notion that whilst they may be ‘unstuck’ physically from their home, they rest emotionally ‘stuck’ to it (Falzon, 2004: p. 89). The analogy used by Said (1994: p. 59) to explain this state of being is as: ‘a shipwrecked person who learns how to live in a certain sense with the land, but not on it.’ Said (ibid.) suggests that diaspora: ‘exist[ing] in a median state, neither completely at one with the new setting nor fully disencumbered of the old, beset with half-involvements and half-detachments, nostalgic and sentimental on one level, an adept mimic or a secret outcast on another.’ The ‘exile’ experience of the diaspora has led some authors to suggest that homeland has become a place of longing, a place associated with sanctuary and security, feelings that would lead to the eventual return of the exile (Featherstone, 1996; Safran, 1991; Woodward, 2003).

Some authors have contended that the homeland is a place of significance because it provides a sense of association of identity for the exiles (Basu, 2004; Brubaker, 2005; Soysal, 2000). It is perceived by the diaspora to possess core cultural values that are uncontaminated by the ‘pollution’ of other cultures or other elements of change. Significantly, a visit to the homeland has the potential to strengthen ethnic identity and provide personal meaning in the lives of the diaspora. While living in exile, in order to cope with their sense of loss, diasporic communities may create familiar spaces in the host countries to make them feel more connected to their homeland (Duarte, 2005; Thomas, 1999). For example, they make a conscious effort to rekindle a connection with objects and experiences from their homeland through practices such as maintaining regular contact with family and friends still there, consuming food similar, and listening to music that reflects the identity of the homeland (see Baldassar, 1997; Duarte, 2005). All these practices are maintained for the purpose of creating an opportunity for migrants to engage in ‘practices of communality’ (Hage, 1997), giving people who originate from the same place the opportunity to reminisce about life in the homeland (see Duarte, 2005; Baldassar, 2001). In other instances, some diasporic communities also set up associations to promote and maintain homeland cultures. They also set up places of worship, as in most cultures, religion forms an integral part of everyday experiences. Being part of the diasporic associations and
visiting these places of worship enable diasporic communities to rekindle their memories of the homeland (see Duarte, 2005).

3.3.2 Routes to roots

As much as homeland is significant in the lives of the diasporic community, it is also suggested that other locations could be important as places of return. The focus shifts from implying ‘roots’ as a fixed location to ‘routes’, centred upon mobile and transcultural geographies of home (Clifford, 1997; Gilroy, 1993). In this context, ‘homeland’ as the original core has lost its leading position in diasporic activities, and its attractiveness has waned due to internal or external forces that altered its cultural character. For example, Falzon (2003) observes how the Hindu-Sindhis left their homeland Sind after the Partition in 1947 and settled in Bombay in India, which has since become the ‘cultural heart’ of the Hindu-Sinhis diaspora.

Cohen (1997) also argues that Safran’s classification of the diaspora (see page 43), focuses too greatly on the relationship between the diaspora and its homeland. Instead, Cohen (ibid.) proposes a re-orientation of conceptualising diaspora beyond the homeland. He emphasises the positive virtues of retaining a diasporic identity in the host countries and the power of collective identity, expressed not just with the homeland, but also in the host countries and with co-ethnic members in other countries. He extends his scope of understanding diaspora to include their experiences in the place of settlement, thus signifying that the experiences of the huaren in Sarawak would have significance in their identity formation.

Several authors have also argued that the identity of a diaspora is not bound just by homeland influences but also by the cultural, social, political and economic conditions of the host countries (Kostovicova and Prestreshi, 2003; Ramji, 2006; Sorenson, 1996). As portrayed in the history of Chinese diaspora in Sarawak in Chapter Two, since their settlement there, the Chinese have established a basis for community and identity formation by demonstrating their historical roles in
Sarawak’s nation building. The previous section (see Section 3.2.3) has also proposed a shift from exploring identity as a fixed entity, suggesting instead that greater spatial mobility has contributed to the multiple and flexible identities that tend to change with shifting circumstances. Therefore the diasporic identity does not necessarily solely portray a reflection of homeland identity but also those that are tied to different countries.

However, the links to both the homeland and the host country can result in tension amongst the diasporic community. It places the discourses of ‘home’ and ‘dispersion’ in a creative tension, ‘inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing a discourse of fixed origins’ (Brah, 1996: p.181). Thus, there may be tension in a state of ‘belonging’, between the ‘homeland’ and ‘home’. A condition that is aptly summated by Clifford (1994: p.311) as: ‘[diasporic communities] mediate, in lived tension, the experiences of separation and entanglement of living here and remembering/desiring another place.’

Accepting that diasporic communities do not just portray an identity that is oriented towards their homeland but also show desire to adapt to the hostland’s political, economic and social norms (Safran et al., 2008), it is therefore not possible to idolize or idealize the existence of a pure culture exported from the homeland. Diasporic individuals frequently harbour a multitude of views about the ‘home’ and ‘homeland’ relationship. However, given that many diasporas maintain active linkages between their societies of origin and settlement (Glick Schiller et al., 1992), their identity is entangled in more than a single narrative, being the product of divergent experiences and multiple belongings (Bhabha, 1990; Kaya, 2005). They are consequently enmeshed in their own community but also attuned to the dominant culture, living in a state of constant tension between the ‘experiences of separation and entanglement’ (Clifford, 1997: p.255). ‘Marginality’, ‘cultural clashes’ and ‘living in two worlds’ are some of the themes that highlight the experiences of diasporas (Ang, 2001; Kibria, 2003). Subsequently, several authors propose interpreting diasporic identities as being hybridised (Featherstone, 1996; Friedman,
1999; Lowe, 1991; Nurse, 1999), a process in which they adapt to the host culture, then rework, reform and reconfigure their own identity to produce new hybrid cultures and ‘hybrid identities’ (Chambers, 1996: p.50).

3.4 Hybridity

As was commented upon at the beginning of the chapter, the approach to identity in this study is one that is primarily informed by the notion that identity is not fixed but socially constructed. The concept of ‘hybridity’ as mentioned in the previous section provides an alternative to the rigid discipline of primordial kinship and rooted belonging (Gilroy, 2000: p. 123). The concept of hybridity offers a dynamic, progressive, diasporic, rhizonic, subversive, anti-essentialist, routes-oriented understanding of identity (Wade, 2005). Hybridisation in this case is the mixing of that which is already a hybrid or sometimes refers to as ‘rhizomic hybridity’ (Strathern, 1992), i.e. it is not the formation from two ‘neat and pure’ wholes coming together to produce a third whole (Gilroy, 2000). Since nothing is in its purest form, ethnic identity has ‘different meanings in different social settings for different individuals’ (Matute-Bianchi, 1991: p.237). As Yang (1994: p.95) suggests: ‘you can’t transpose one culture into another and expect it to grow the same way ... where you transpose you get a hybrid bloom which is neither one or the other.’

While the concept of hybridity is gaining in significance in the understanding of the identity of diasporic communities, the ideas presented are often ambiguous. One perspective recognises that individuals construct multiple identities that they oscillate between, one to the other, in different contexts through a ‘double consciousness’ (Gilroy, 1993). Another perspective emphasizes the fusion of identities in which a ‘third space’ is created (Bhabha 1990). In both these perspectives, there is a general tendency to assume hybridity as a negative experience in hybrid lives of the diasporic community. Several authors have illustrated these negative experiences as ‘living in tension’ (Clifford, 1994: p.311); ‘being unstuck and yet stuck’ (Falzon 2004: p.89); and living in ‘ambivalence’ and ‘restlessness’ (Bhabha, 1994). However, hybridity
does not always have to be a negative experience, as Ngan (2007: p.41) suggests: “hybridity is an accepted living experience of a hybrid community.”

3.4.1 ‘Double Consciousness’ and ‘The Third Space’

Both Gilroy (1993) and Bhabha (1990) have attempted to explain the concept and complexity of hybridity and their works have been significant in both challenging the concept of homogenous identity and contributing to the understanding of hybridised identity. According to Gilroy (1993), individuals develop multiple identities that they move between different contexts, through a ‘double consciousness’. The development of a ‘double consciousness’ reveals the hybrid character of modern ethnicity and the diasporic communities (ibid.). People portray different identities and oscillate between identities when they are positioned in different social settings, for example a young male Anglo-Indian may display the characteristics of a typical British male when out with his friends but display more of an Indian identity at cultural and family functions.

However, many diasporas have become ‘undecidedly mixed with otherness’ (Young, 1995: p.50) and dwell in a space where their cultural practices continue to be negotiated, transformed and rearticulated (Bhabha, 1994). Ngan (2007) argues that Gilroy’s concept of hybridity is still formulated within the boundaries of a unified paradigm, meaning that individuals could identify themselves as categorically different because this notion of hybridity depends on the identification of where one fits in society, being highly correlated to identity categories. Many ethnic communities portray more of their ethnic identity when they are at home but reflect more of a social identity when they are socialising with ‘others’ not of their ethnic identity.

Geertz (1988: p.148) on the other hand argues that hybridized identities mean that it is no longer possible to draw a line between cultural differences because people are now living in a world characterized as ‘a gradual spectrum of mixed-up differences’. Accordingly it allows for difference, unpredictability and heterogeneity in which identity is not one or the other, being produced in the ‘third space’, that is an ‘in-between’ space of hybridity. The third space
witnesses the ‘cross-fertilization of cultures’ (Lye, 2008), excluding the essentialist margins of ethnicities. It is a discourse that acknowledges the practices and values of the in-between spaces within ethnicities as well as across ethnicities.

According to Bhabha (1990), hybridity is not a consequence of other ‘pure’ distinctive categories intermixed together. He (ibid.1990: p.211) argues that the third space is composed of the ‘hybridity that comes from being betwixt and between’ and in effect is a liminal space. Liminal space as Bhabha defines it is: “the interstitial space where fixed identification boundaries and binarisms are blurred, to negotiate ethnic subjectivities which are ‘neither the one nor the other ... but something else besides’” (Bhabha, 1994: p.28). Subsequently, the third space is a site where identity is negotiated and where a person’s hybridity, complexity and ambiguity are situated. Writing of her own experiences of being a person of Chinese descent who was born in Indonesia but grew up in the Netherlands, Ang (2001: p.194) wrote:

If I were to apply this notion of complicated entanglement to my own personal situation, I would describe myself as suspended in-between: neither truly Western nor authentically Asian; embedded in the West yet always partially disengaged from it; disembedded from Asia yet somehow enduringly attached to it emotionally and historically. I wish to hold onto this hybrid in-betweeness not because it is a comfortable position to be in, but because its very ambivalence is a discourse of cultural permeability and vulnerability which is a necessary condition for living together-in-difference.

Such ‘hybrid in-betweeness’ is a new form of identity suspended in a space of liminality in which ‘complicated entanglement’ of identity is positioned. Despite Ang’s experiences of being in-between, neither ‘Western’ nor ‘Asian’, she is however clear about where she fits in the liminal space (Ngan, 2007).
3.4.2 Hybridity as stable identity

Although liminality is strongly related to the concept of hybridity, it is recognised that the discourse of liminality still assumes the existence of at least two fixed entities or essentialist ideas. Consequently, it is not possible to deny all forms of essentialism, recognising that all thinking is persuaded by a degree of essentialism (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992; Landry and MacLean, 1996). As Lo (2000: p.74) states: ‘there is a paradoxical interdependence between categorical thinking and hybridity for the ambiguity of hybridity is sustained by the existence of categories [without which] the vacillation that produces ambiguity is impossible.’ Since it is not possible that the notion of essentialist thinking be done away with, it is even more crucial that such thinking be exposed in order to identify subjectivity within the liminal space.

As Meerwald (2002: p.77) explains:

For in this liminal space, I can be sometimes this, and sometimes that, sometimes accepted and other times rejected. Despite all the contradictions experienced I know that in this liminal space, I do not even have to choose between one or the other. I can be at home in a state of incommensurability. I don’t have to reconcile my differences within or without. It is within this flux that I gain stability. There is no end or final hybrid culture. The subject sometimes practices traditional customs, sometimes a fusion, sometimes a something else that is familiar and yet different.

Meerwald’s (2002) account of her experience is an indication that she has accepted hybridity as part of everyday life of being Chinese and living in Australia. She concludes that people should not be forced to choose between one identity or the other but that people should be free to saddle comfortably between the two or to juggle multiple cultures (ibid.: p.209). The concept of hybridity has become a norm in the lives of many of the diasporic community and is not necessarily problematic.

As the identity of the diaspora is constantly contested, questions arise as to their orientation; i.e. the balance of relations with their homeland vis-a-vis re-orienting their attention towards their
new environment. An important aspect of this orientation and connection are the ways diaspora and their descendants construct notions of ‘home’, whereby a sense of belonging, place and self are contested, articulated and shaped. By drawing upon the concept of ‘diaspora’ and ‘hybridity’, the following section examines the theorisation of ‘home’ and ‘homeland’ as a means to understanding Chinese identity.

3.5 Home and homeland

3.5.1 Home and homeland as fixed locality

Prior to the late nineteenth century, the majority of the world’s population lived highly localized lives. The understanding of the term ‘home’ was synonymous as being the ‘homeland’, that is the locale of one’s birth (Weber, 1976; Kaiser, 2002). For many people, as Hobsbawm (1991: p. 65) puts it, ‘home’ represents both: ‘the place from where we set out and to which we return.’ In the specific context of the Chinese community, Ang (1998) argues that the reason the Chinese overseas are attached to their homeland is due to the legendary commitment to one’s ancestral home and devotion to the family. Notably, the importance placed on filial piety as a supreme virtue, helps to explain the importance of geographical space to some Chinese (Jordan, 1998). Thus, the ancestral home remains significant within the performance of obedience to one’s ancestors.

Many Chinese have also understood China as the centre of the universe, as is implied in the Chinese name for China of ‘Zhunguo’, meaning the central kingdom. Thus those who live in China consider themselves to be cultured and civilised, while elsewhere exist peripheral spaces occupied by the non-Chinese who are considered as ‘barbarians’, ‘foreign devils’ or ‘ghosts’ (Tu, 1994). Thus the contribution of China as a homeland with its long history and definable nature of Chinese identity has supported a strong sense of ethnic identity for the huaqiao and huaren (Parker, 1995).
This discourse focuses upon elevating homeland to the root point for the *huaqiao* and *huaren* all over the world, ignoring movements across national and cultural borders that have led individuals to become more heterogeneous. There is thus the propensity to privilege fixed notions of homeland and identity as the authentic space, whilst devaluing other places of residence as Braziel and Mannur (2003: p.6) contend:

> ...privileged the geographical, political, cultural and subjective spaces of home-nation as an authentic space of belonging and civic participation, while devaluing and bastardizing the states of displacement and dislocation, rendering them inauthentic places of residence.

It is subsequently argued that a more fluid concept of home is required to embrace the complexity and plurality of diaspora, which would include reconceptualising the meanings of home and identity to be more plurilocal (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Mallett, 2004; McIntyre et al., 2006).

### 3.5.2 Shifting homeland to home

The fluid nature of postmodern living means that the concept of home is no longer bound or constrained by local condition but that the concept of home is 'liberated from local ways of life, community mores, and parochial society' (Williams and McIntyre, 2001: p.393). Instead Rouse (1991) suggests that a more mobile conception of home should come to the fore, as something ‘plurilocal’, and something to be taken along whenever one decamps. As such, in order to understand the connections between ‘identity’ and ‘home’, notions of ‘home’ need to be exposed to unconventional explorations including problematising the concept of ‘home’ as a fixed locality and reconceptualising it as unfixed, multiple and contested.

For the diaspora, the notion of home is believed to be simultaneously in the present as the host country and in the past as the country of origin. Bell (2002) argues that the concept of ‘home’ is made distinct particularly after a journey away and thus being away from home can renew one’s
perception of it. Thus being ‘away’ from the homeland creates a renewed sense of ‘home’ as being there for the diasporic community, and according to Delaney (1990), the regular visit home for the diasporic community may be the main integrating factor in their lives.

It is also suggested that home for the diasporic community may rest upon an ideological construct, a yearning for past familiarity or fulfilment in the future (Chambers, 1994; Gowans, 2006; Yeoh and Huang, 2000). In the discourse of diaspora, it is typically advocated that a diasporic community desires to return to their homeland and its members may visit their homeland to fulfill their longing for home. As diasporic people are living away from their ancestral homeland, the notion of a distant homeland is central to diasporic imaginary (Falzon, 2003). As Baldassar puts it, the ‘home town becomes the secular shrine to be visited for, not spiritual, but for ethnic renewal and rebirth’ (Baldassar, 1998: p. 147).

This line of argument to emphasise home as a fixed locality, regardless of whether the concept refers to the diasporas’ old or new home, is based on the assumption that every diasporic community would have a home to return to, whether it is a factual or constructed homeland. It does not take into account that some diasporic communities may not know where home is because ‘the world has changed to the point that those domestic, national or marked spaces no longer exist’ (Braziel and Mannur, 2003: p.19).

In order to de-construct the concept of home, Walter (2008) re-conceptualises the understanding of home from the symbolic perspective of a roof (shelter, protection, comfort, privacy), relationships (social, personal, emotional), and roots (identity, culture). These three aspects of roof, relationships and roots give human beings a sense of belonging in the world (Mallett, 2004; Somerville, 1992; Tucker, 1994), particularly for diasporic communities and successive generations. Simultaneously, deficiencies in any of these three aspects could result in a sense of ‘homelessness’. For example, a caravan roof may become ‘home’ during a long-term trip but
only if significant ‘others’ are present (White and White, 2007); whilst a familiar community in a ‘strange’ location may feel like home (Ahmed, 1999; Jahnke, 2002; McIntyre et al., 2006).

All the three aspects of home as proposed by Walter (2008) do not conceptualise home as being based on a fixed location but suggest it is contextualised in familiar practices. Similarly, Berger (1984) argues that the concept of home for travellers, labour migrants, exiles and commuters including the diaspora, is ‘a routine set of practices, a repetition of habitual interactions, in styles of dress and address, in memories and myths, in stories carried around in one’s head’ (ibid.: p.64).

3.5.3 Constructing home(s)

From Walter’s (2008) perspective of constructing home through relationships, diasporic movement often fractures familial and friendship networks of the homeland, resulting in the formation of new familial and friendship networks in the receiving country. As established in the previous section, many of the diasporic community maintain a set of routine cultural practices familiar to their homeland in their new environment, in order to construct a sense of ‘home’.

However, most diasporic studies have traditionally assumed that when ‘home’ is mentioned by the first and second generations, it means the physical place of their origin. This literature neglects how the descendents of the diaspora establish their identity in relation to their imagination of their homeland. Brah (1996: p.192) argues that because a sense of home is a sensory experience, ‘a lived experience of locality, its sounds and smells’, so generations that are born outside the country of origin would posses a different concept of home than their ancestors. Their concept of ‘home’ may not be similar to previous generations because they lack the experience of living there and their concept of ‘home’ is subsequently nothing more than an imagination.
It is often assumed that the successive generations would have a natural affinity towards their ancestral homeland because their parents and/or grandparents have maintained familial networks there. However, many of the successive generations of diasporas, particularly those born on foreign soil, do not participate in ‘widespread movement back and forth between communities of origin and destinations’ (Levitt and Waters, 2002: p.5). As Khu (2001) highlighted in a number of the autobiographies in Cultural Curiosity, these individuals may not even be familiar with patterns of transnational practices. They may have never travelled to the ‘homeland’ or may not speak their native language. Subsequently, their connections with the homeland are ‘faded’ compared to those of the first and second generations.

Conversely, Appadurai (1997: p.7) contends that, ‘diaspora always leave a collective memory about another place and time and create new maps of desire and of attachment’. Although individuals may have never physically been to their ancestral homeland, they acquire cultural knowledge from other mediums, including the family, media, and internet, thus being influenced by ideologies of the homeland (Ngan, 2007). Thus the construction of home for successive generations is partly fabricated through diasporic imagination.

Similarly, Basch et al., (1994) have indicated that although the first generation are more active in maintaining links between the homeland and the receiving country, their children maintain these ties at emotional levels through ideologies and cultural codes. Even those who never return to their parents ancestral homes, are brought up in environments where people, values and goods associated with the homeland, are present on a daily basis. The forming of identity is subsequently influenced by the transnational ties maintained by older generations within the family. As Ngan (2007) argues, through intergenerational connections, memories of stories, myths, events and old photos, as a part of daily life, identity is continually formulated and a sense of belonging established.
3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explained the essentialist view of identity, which is based on the premise of identity having an unchanging essence. Within the essentialist paradigm, ‘Chineseness’ is defined by a set of character traits that are unchanging and universal, thus individuals who are of Chinese descent would ‘share a common ancestry, a history and a shared symbol of peoplehood originated from China’ (Cornell and Hartman, 1998: p.32). They recognise their Chinese identity as ‘some primordial core or essence of ‘Chineseness’ which one has by virtue of one’s Chinese genes’ (Pan, 1994: p. 267), thus being Chinese is a naturalised and unchallenged component of their identity.

However, with greater mobility across various geo-political and cultural boundaries, the distinctive markers of identity are becoming uncertain. Subsequently, as Walter (2008: p:3) argues: ‘with increased mobility and globalisation, traditional conceptions of individuals as members of fixed and separate societies and cultures are being challenged, as is the notion of physical places shaping identities and cultures’. For the huaqiao and huaren who have settled in scattered communities far from their ancestral homeland, their identity construction is subject to varying perceptions and forces of political, cultural and social hegemony. The increased flows of information, people, resources and capital have changed local conditions in many aspects of life, thus it argued that ‘Chineseness’ is a fluid process which is not fixed by a set of defined and static parameters (Bottomley, 1997). For example, as discussed in the previous chapter, the Sarawakian-Chinese have become increasingly heterogeneous, divided by education and religious beliefs.

Discounting homogeneous identity categories as being stereotypical and unrealistic in a world that is increasingly dynamic and inter-connected, it is argued that the paradigm of anti-essentialism is more relevant to understanding the changing identity of the Chinese community. In the anti-essentialist version, identity is a fluid construction which changes its meaning according to time and place. Thus, there is no one version of Chinese identity but meanings of being Chinese differ from country to country, individual to individual. For example, what it means
to be *huaren* in Sarawak would be significantly different to that in China, and likewise the expression of being Chinese will differ with locality.

However, even if there is convincing theoretical and empirical evidence to support anti-essentialism as the best approach of understanding the transformation of Chinese identity, the significance of identity still depends largely on the fact that the structuring of society is correlated to a sense of collective identities. Contrary to anti-essentialist arguments that identity cannot be definitely defined, the way in which the *huaqiao* and *huaren* communities in the periphery organise themselves according to specific collectivities, suggests that essentialist notions perpetuate in the carving-out of identities in their daily lives (Ngan, 2007). As Friedman (1997: p.71) explains in the context of a declining hegemonic order in the age of globalisation, ‘we find a return to roots, to fixed identifications that are immune, in principle from social change.’

It is suggested in this chapter that identity is conditioned through ongoing interactions between the ‘self’ and ‘other’, which involves a process of ‘relational positioning’ (Ngan, 2007). Identities evolve through interaction and are relational in nature; therefore always being in a state of reformation. How people perceive their identity is not just based on natural or biological phenomenon but also by their sense of identification with other groups. Their attitudes towards their own identity, their opinions towards other identities in relation to their own, their sentiments towards their own collective identity and the stereotype they place on others, are all *subjective*, not necessarily based on *objective* criteria. Subsequently, the theoretical stance of this thesis is that identity, including the identity of the Sarawakian-Chinese, is an imagined and socially constructed identity, conditioned through a process of relational positioning.

The case of the changing identity of the *huaqiao* and *huaren* is demonstrated in the context of diaspora, the original and deconstructed concepts of which were explained in Section 3.3. Within the original discourse of diaspora, there is an emphasis on homeland as a place of return and that ‘home’ cannot be found elsewhere. It is argued that whilst homeland is significant, the
research should identify ‘routes’ besides ‘roots’, as diasporic identity does not solely portray a reflection of homeland but also that of settlement in different countries. Consequently, there is an emphasis on understanding hyphenated communities because of their multiple and contested identities, which are tied to multiple locations.

In a world of heightened mobility that challenges the essentialist paradigm, different ways of understanding the ‘ambivalent’ experiences of diasporic communities are made possible by the concept of hybridity. Various perspectives of hybridity including ‘double consciousness’ (see Gilroy, 1993) and the ‘third space’ (see Bhabha, 1990), have relevance to understanding the multiple identities of diasporic communities. As members of the diasporic community are often forced to oscillate between identities in different contexts, they can be categorised as occupying a space of liminality. However, as opposed to most discourses of hybridity that emphasise living in this liminal space as creating a sense of tension, there is also evidence of the acceptance of a hybrid identity as a stable one.

As this research challenges the concept of a fixed identity, the understanding of home and homeland as fixed localities is also questioned. Due to the greater opportunity for mobility of postmodern living, the concept of ‘home’ in this study is explored not purely as a physical place where people live, but also as a place of experiences, meanings and feelings. The concept of diaspora thus provides a framework for rethinking ‘home’, in which the meanings of ‘home’ are multiple and fluid. Subsequently, ‘home’ may be understood as a socially constructed phenomenon and a place that can become founded upon a routine set of familiar practices. Having attempted to unravel the complexities of identity formation, the next chapter will explore the relationship between tourism and identity, considering the experiences of tourism for diasporic communities.
4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 established the main theoretical and conceptual frameworks relevant to understanding identity, emphasising an anti-essentialist perspective of Chinese identity. However, it also recognises that essentialist notions of ‘Chineseness’ resonate in much of the literature (Tan, 2004). Whilst studies that indicate the huaren around the world have become more heterogeneous (Chen, 1992; Benton and Pieke, 1998), formulating new ethnicities and identities, Zelinsky (2001) emphasises that the huaren still feel connected with one another across distance by imagined and/or tangible common bonds.

Maintaining an inter-connectedness across geographical boundaries has become easier with advances in technology, transportation and communication, which have led to a time-space compression, meaning people, goods and information travel greater distances in shorter periods of time (Sharpley and Telfer, 2008). Of particular interest for this research is the connection of diasporic people through travel and tourism, where mobility is facilitated by improvements in transportation and information technology. Political transformations in the past decades, such as the collapse of the Berlin Wall and China’s ‘Open Door Policy’ have also allowed diasporas to
return to their ancestral homelands. However, the effects of this increased opportunity for travel upon the identity of diaspora, remains an under-researched area.

Certainly, the post-modern compression of time and space creates opportunities for encounters between the diaspora and those in the homeland. It is the experiences of these close encounters that are of interest to this research, specifically the effects they have upon the identity of the Sarawakian-Chinese diaspora. Research of other diaspora, (see Bhabha, 1994; Gilroy, 1993; Hall, 1997, 1998) indicates that a sense of tension and ambiguity can arise within diasporic communities returning to their homeland.

The diaspora who formerly were ‘hosts’ in their homeland, may find upon returning there that they have become ‘guests’ in their own countries. However, consideration of the host-guest relationship is often neglected in the discourse on diaspora, on the presumption of having shared historical and cultural backgrounds. It is commonly assumed that both those who departed and those who were left behind all belong to a homogenous group, without a differentiation of ‘us’ and ‘them’. However, as Yang (1994: p.95) comments ‘you can’t transpose one culture into another and expect it to grow the same way ... where you transpose you get a hybrid bloom which is neither one or the other’.

The host-guest relationship is a central theme of tourism literature and relating it to the theoretical stance of the previous chapter, i.e. that identity is an imagined social construct conditioned through a process of relational positioning, it is suggested that the ‘hosts/guests’, ‘us/them’ relationships may be re-conceptualised in the context of travel and diaspora. It is proposed by some anthropologists that much of contemporary tourism is founded upon the ‘quest for the other’ (Berghe, 1994; MacCannell, 1976). The ‘other’ is often assumed to be those who are different from ‘us’, culturally, politically, socially and economically. Subsequently, the
next section of the chapter considers the relevance of this concept to the diaspora’s relationship with the culture of homeland.

4.2 Tourism and the making of ‘Us’ and ‘Them’

4.2.1 The close encounter with the ‘Others’

According to MacCannell (1976), tourists go on holiday because they are searching for ‘authenticity’ that is absent in everyday life. He implies that modern societies are inauthentic and consequently people participate in tourism to find and experience authenticity in less than modern societies. MacCannell (1976) perceives the everyday life of ‘primitive’ societies to be more authentic than those who live in modern world. Therefore, in order for tourists to experience ‘authenticity’, tourists would have to venture from their affluent, civilised, and industrial world to the poorer, primitive and less developed world, which is situated in the peripheries (Bruner, 1989).

According to Brown (1996), tourists often conjure up images of those who dwell in the pre-modern and pre-commoditised societies to be significantly different from themselves, consequently demarcating those who live in the peripheries to be ‘others’. It is therefore not surprising that the ‘quest for the other’ is often embedded in the heart of ethnic tourism, a form of tourism that is ‘manufactured from a desire to seek out the cultural exoticism of other ethnic groups and societies’ (McIntosh and Goeldner, 1990: p.139). Exotic ‘others’ have become the primary focus of the tourist gaze (Li, 2000; Smith, 1989; Urry 1990), examples including the gazing of the indigenous peoples in Australia (Hollinshead, 1996; Zeppel, 1998) and New Zealand (Ryan, 1997; McIntosh, 2004).

This kind of tourism, i.e. involving searching for the ‘other’, is commonly contextualised in the form of host-guest relations (Smith and Brent, 2001). Host and guest relations in tourism may be
recognized as a ‘juxtaposition of contrast; involving hosts who belong to peripheral and non-western societies and guests who originate from metropolitan advanced western nations’ (King, 1994: p. 175). In essence, ethnic identity or the identity of the ‘others’ is a significant component in the motivation of ethnic tourism, a form of tourism that has relevance to this research, particularly in relation to the identity of ‘host-guest’ and ‘us-others’.

However, the complexities of determining who are the ‘hosts/guests’ and ‘us/others’ are reflected in the return visits of the Chinese diasporic communities. As discussed in the previous chapter, the meaning of ‘Chineseness’ has become fluid and changeable and the huaren around the world have become more heterogeneous. Consequently, these contrasts amongst the huaren, huaqiao and zhungguaren have created a sense of ‘otherness’ amongst these different groups. In the context of huaren visiting China in their quest for seeking out the ‘others’, it is difficult to identify the relationship because of the complexities of determining whether China is the centre or the periphery of Chinese identity. The boundary between ‘host/guest’ and ‘us/others’ is often blurred in the context of identity negotiation between the diasporic community and those of the ancestral homeland.

4.2.2 Finding ‘Us’

As much as seeking out ‘differences’ is relevant to this research, the quest for ‘similarity’ also has direct relevance to this research. King’s (1994) use of the term ‘ethnic tourism’ applies to travel resulting from a primary motivation for ethnic reunion. He argues that the emphasis is not on contrast or exotic ‘others’, but rather a quest to search for similarity, belonging and group identification, the finding of which offers affirmation of one’s own and/or collective identity. In terms of relevance to the diasporic communities, it is suggested that diaspora participate in ethnic tourism to affirm their shared collective identity. Statistically, there is support for this comment, with thirty per cent of travellers to Greece being Greek-Americans (Thanopoulos and Walle, 1988) and thirty-eight per cent of visitors to Poland being Polish born (Ostrowski, 1991).
This seeking out those who are the same includes both encountering them in their ancestral homeland and meeting them in other diasporic spaces where co-members of the diaspora have settled. Typical manifestations of this behaviour are Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) or Visiting Relatives (VR), (Feng and Page, 2000; Kang and Page, 2000), and participating in events and festivals that are unique to the diasporic communities. Of particular interest to this research are the motivations of why the Sarawakian-Chinese seek out those in the ancestral homeland who are similar, and how this influences their identity, a niche of tourist behaviour that can be termed ‘diaspora tourism’.

4.3 Tourism and diaspora

The previous chapter recognised the concepts of ‘diaspora’, ‘hybridity’ and ‘home’ as being central to understanding identity formation. This section concentrates upon the relationship diasporas have with tourism, an activity that has to date been marginalised in the literature on diaspora and hybridity (Coles and Timothy, 2004), perhaps because tourists visits are thought to be temporary and superficial (Brunner, 1996). However, recently there have been more studies examining the relationship between diaspora and tourism (Coles and Timothy, 2004; Duval, 2003; Hall and Williams, 2002). Many of these focus on individuals and groups who participate in ‘diaspora tourism’ to their ancestral homeland. A common feature of (return) visits to the ancestral homeland is a desire to (re)affirm identity by (re)connecting with the cultural roots (Coles and Timothy, 2004; Duval, 2003; Hall and Williams, 2002).

According to the World Travel Market, WTM (2007), ‘diaspora tourism’ can be segmented into three categories: heritage, residential and festival tourism, whilst ‘diaspora tourism’ is defined by Coles and Timothy (2004) as tourism that is consumed and experienced by diasporic communities, commonly involving participating in travel and tourism to their ancestral homelands. According to the technical definitions of the WTM (ibid.), heritage tourism involves returning
home to learn more about one’s ancestry whilst residential tourism involves investment in property, and festival tourism is driven by those who return for important events and festivals.

However, the WTM’s report on ‘diaspora tourism’ lacks investigation and detail of the diasporas’ motivations for participating in travel and tourism to their ancestral homeland. According to the academic research in tourism studies, the reasons diasporic communities participate in travel to their ancestral homeland can be explained by two central motivations: (re)enhancing kinship relationships and/or (re)discovering cultural roots. Thus the WTM’s (ibid.) interpretation of heritage and festival tourism could be subsumed under the theme of (re)discovering cultural roots as they relate to the cultural heritage of the diaspora. Residential tourism involves maintaining both familial and social networks through property investment. The themes of enhancement of familial relationships and the re-discovering of cultural roots are explored in detail in the next two sub-sections of the chapter.

4.3.1 (Re)enhancing familial and social relationships

There would appear to be a strong connection between (re)enhancing kinship relationships and VFR travel to the homeland. Tourism in this case provides a means of connecting people as a basis for expected reciprocity in kinship visits (Faist, 2000). It is also be understood as a means to replenish depleted inner stores of connection to people and place (Foran, 2000), particularly when people are not living in close geographical proximity to one another.

The principle of using travel and tourism to maintain and enhance the connections of the diaspora to family in the homeland is supported by research. For example, in research with the Commonwealth Eastern Caribbean community of Toronto in Canada, Duval (2004) found that the primary purpose of return visits to the homeland was to maintain social and cultural ties. He (ibid.: p.285) argues that: ‘the theme of maintaining social and cultural ties centres on and incorporates the return visits as a means to sustain ties with family members and friends’.
Similar motivations were also found amongst the Vietnamese residents of Australia (Nguyen and King, 1998) and the Afro-Caribbean community of Manchester in England (Stephenson, 2002).

Various typologies of tourism have emerged to describe the familial links of diasporas to the homeland, including ‘genealogical’ (Nash, 2002), ‘ancestral’ (Fowler, 2003) and ‘family history’ tourism. These typologies may comprise several components, some of which overlap with ethnic reunion tourism, for example travel to reaffirm bonds of kinship may be accompanied by visits to significant sites relevant to the personal heritage of individuals and communities. This is exemplified by the research of Baldassar (2001), who notes that the Italian diaspora in Australia travels to Italy not just to visit their friends and relatives, but also to visit heritage sites.

The importance of the maintaining of family relationships and the process of reunion, is that besides the fulfilling of emotional needs, it acts as a process of identity affirmation and reaffirmation (Basu, 2004; Coles and Timothy, 2004; Rapport and Dawson, 1998). Therefore, by visiting the ancestral homeland regularly, it may be possible to re-establish ethnic identity if this is felt to be threatened (Basu, 2001; Bruner, 1996). It is also suggested that regular visits to the ancestral homeland can re-affirm a sense of belonging that may not exist in the new country of residence. For example, O’Connor (2005) notes that Irish migrants in Australia invest time and finance for frequent visits ‘home’, as a means of reaffirming their belonging to Ireland.

Although the visiting of family may be undertaken for the purposes of strengthening ties and reunion, this form of travel may also be motivated by a sense of fulfilling family and societal obligations (Stephenson, 2002; Duval, 2003; Urry, 2003). For example, in Ali and Holden’s (2006) research into the Pakistani community in England, travelling to the ancestral homeland of Pakistan was primarily for the purpose of attending events such as burials, funerals, festivals and weddings. The community travelled to Pakistan to attend these events because they felt a sense of obligation to do so and to be seen to be belonging to the kinship group. A similar social
convention and imperative is also observable amongst the Vietnamese residents of Australia, for whom the motivations for travelling to Vietnam are primarily for the purpose of caring for the graves of their ancestors, to re-affirm family membership or to marry members of particular families (Nguyen and King, 2002).

In an analysis of the VFR market, Moscardo et al., (2000) make a distinction between VFR as an activity and VFR as the prime travel motivation. They describe the former as travellers who seek to participate in a range of tourist type activities that would include renewing or enjoying social connections. In contrast, when VFR is the prime travel motivation there is less interest in other tourist activities, and a greater, if not total focus on social obligations. The significance of whether VFR is conceptualised as an ‘activity’ or as the ‘prime travel motivation’, is of relevance to diaspora, as it is symbolic of the kinds and degrees of attachment diaspora have with their ancestral homeland.

This section has reviewed research of diaspora tourism and the VFR market. There is evidence to suggest that travel and tourism is used for purposes of maintaining and strengthening familial ties and reaffirming belonging and identity. As a part of this latter process, the literature also suggests that travel and tourism may be used to reaffirm one’s ‘cultural roots’, as is discussed in the next section.

4.3.2 (Re)discovering cultural roots and the influence of nostalgia

The component of maintaining social and cultural ties also often includes the diaspora’s desire to attain cultural knowledge of their traditional customs and way of life. Stephenson (2002: p.393) observes that the revisiting of places of origin by ethnic people and minorities allows them to: ‘reconstruct their ancestral homeland and to search and/or re-search for one’s cultural roots.’ By implication, through visiting their ancestral homeland, they are able to construct an identity based
upon the interpretation of how their ancestors and previous generations lived in the past. This
desire to affirm a connection and identity with the past is also supported by Wang (1999a) and
Meethan (2004), who advocate that ethnic tourists aspire to reinforce notions of past lives
(Wang, 1999) and imagined pasts (Meethan, 2004). In particular, Stephenson’s (2002)
ethnographic research has shown that childhood stories, community narratives and personal
experiences are critical to enabling individuals to construct an image of the ancestral homeland,
which may be transmitted to subsequent generations, thus creating a sense of continuation of
the past to the present. The process of creating and re-creating the images of homeland during
childhood experiences in this instance occurs through parental instruction.

The longing for a connection with past lives is also spurred by a sense of nostalgia, both
personal and historical (Stern, 1992). According to Stern (ibid.) ‘personal nostalgia’ indicates a
sentimental yearning for the past that one has actually experienced, for example childhood
memories. ‘Historical nostalgia’ on the other hand, refers to the creation of a romantic desire for
the past based upon an image that is formulated through access to various media and is not built
upon lived experiences. As much as nostalgia is a sentimental yearning for the irrevocable past
in contrast to the present, Kim (2005) argues that personal nostalgia is considered to be a
fundamental human disposition of all, whilst historical nostalgia has a propensity for social
construction based on the images manufactured by the culture industry and state propaganda
(ibid.: p.86). Therefore, the first generation diasporic community may display a propensity for
personal nostalgia established on their own experiences of having lived in the homeland, while
subsequent generations may be more inclined towards historical nostalgia built upon social
constructions of story telling and personal narratives.

Personal nostalgia is subsequently particularly significant for those who have firsthand
experience of the ‘place’, often motivating diaspora to make return visits to their ancestral
homelands. A closeness to one’s own history and past is also synonymous to a form of
‘nostalgia’. This concept of nostalgia is usually based on the perspective that the past is better
than the present (see Caton and Santos, 2007), as the past is associated with ‘beauty, pleasure, joy and satisfaction’, while the present is ‘bleak, grim and unfulfilling’ (ibid.). Often this nostalgia extends beyond the lived experience to include the phenomenon of longing for a culturally remembered past that may have occurred before one’s birth and hence not have been experienced personally (Dann, 1994; Hewison, 1987). Subsequently, it is argued if diaspora do not feel fulfilled in their new country, travel and tourism to their ancestral homeland may provide a means to satisfy their personal nostalgia, which is fuelled by dissatisfaction. For example, due to their discontentment of living in America and their desire for a traditional Greek culture, Christou (2003) observed that the second generation Greek-Americans made regular visits to their ancestral homeland, to fulfil their sense of nostalgia.

The influence of nostalgia and the desire to understand more about one’s own background and heritage may also extend to seeking out one’s cultural roots and family backgrounds (Bruner, 1996; Lowe, 1991; Stephenson, 2002). A re-connection with cultural roots is held to be important in several cultures and therefore subsequent generations are encouraged to visit their ancestral homeland for the purpose of maintaining traditional culture and religious beliefs (Mindel and Habenstein, 1981). Returning to one’s cultural roots may also lead to a sense of belonging, for example, Bruner (1996: p.293) found that: ‘for black American men, returning to Africa represents a return to manhood; to a land where they feel they belong; where they can protect their women; and where they can reconnect with their ancestry.’

Travel and tourism may also be used for the maintenance of the ‘traditional culture’ in the new country of settlement through marriage. Nguyen and King (2002) comment that the Vietnamese in Australia return to Vietnam to find spouses of the same ethnicity, who may be in short supply in the host country. By marrying those of the same ethnicity, it is hoped that the traditional culture could at least be preserved within the family. In other cultures also, diasporic travel to the homeland to find spouses is also evident, for example within the Indian and Pakistan diasporas (Ali, 2008).
4.4 The impacts of return visits and tourism on hybridity

The passage of time and the establishment of successive generations of diaspora in places away from their homeland, has led to the understanding of diasporic communities as hybridised groups (Featherstone, 1996; Friedman, 1999; Lowe, 1991; Nurse, 1999). The rationale for this is that not all diasporic identities are linked to a single place but are influenced by several places, resulting in multiple allegiances to various places (Van Hear, 1998). Subsequently, whilst for some members of the diaspora visits to the homeland may reinforce their homeland-identity for others it may heighten their sense of hybridity (Kibria, 2003; Louie, 2004; Stephenson, 2002).

Several studies have indicated that those of Chinese ethnicity born in Western countries who visited China felt themselves to have more of a Western identity than a Chinese one (Kibria, 2003; Louie, 2004; Maruyama and Stronza, 2006). A common theme to the results of those studies was that they did not feel a sense of belonging to their homeland, rather a sentiment of being ‘out of place’ and ‘out of time’. Similarly, in a study of the Italians residing in Australia, Thompson (1980) observed that many of them who returned to visit Italy expected life to be as before they departed, only to find the contrary. Rather than re-enforcing their identity to their ancestral homeland, visits there emphasised the virtues of their adopted country, thus enhancing their sense of social well-being and contentment in the new country (Chetkovich, 2003; Grimes, 1979).

Important to the impact of return visits on identity is how changes that have occurred since their departure are evaluated. Duval (2003) observes that when the diasporic Caribbean community in Canada make return trips to their ancestral homeland, it also entails examining the changes and transformations that have occurred both in themselves and in their places of origin. According to Duval (2003: p.289), ‘the essence of measuring change and transformation is really one of comparison and identity negotiation.’ This process may lead to troubling, disconcerting
and ambiguous experiences, as well as new found ambivalences (Stephenson, 2002; Duval, 2003).

In some instances, the ambivalences of experience encountered by some diaspora were compounded by their discomfort at their reception in the ancestral homeland (see Stephenson, 2002). For example, African-Americans returning to Ghana found themselves labelled as ‘obruni’ by the local Ghanians, meaning ‘white and foreign’ (Bruner, 1996). While the African-Americans perceived themselves as black and returning to their ancestral homeland, the reception they received was different, being treated as ‘foreigners’. A further irony was that in comparison to the ‘white foreigners’, the African-Americans were treated as a class of second-class foreigner. However, according to Bruner (1996) the return of the African-Americans to their African soil was as a whole a journey that would reinforce their black identity. Nevertheless, this labelling of ‘us’ and ‘them’ and strong associations with another identity, must inevitably lead to conflict over one’s self-identity.

Further conflict over identity may also arise when groups share the same heritage and historic places but interpret them differently (Olsen and Timothy, 2002; Timothy and Boyd, 2002). For example, returning to the African-Americans visiting Ghana, their experience of Elmina Castle, a major staging post in the mid-Atlantic slave trade was highly emotional and they interpreted it as a sacred site. However, for the local Ghanaians who had never suffered as slaves or experienced the agony of being displaced, the Castle was seen more as a festive and tourist site rather than a sacred site. These marked contradictions of representation and interpretation, expose the possible complexities of constructing a shared identity between those who left the country and those who were left behind.
4.5 Tourism and authenticity

Whilst Section 4.2.1 introduced the issue of a search for ‘authenticity’ as a motivating factor for tourism, the issue is complex when applied to diaspora. The return to the homeland raises questions of ‘authentic’ and ‘inauthentic’ identities and cultural practices. For example, if ritual and cultural practices in China are different to those practised by the Sarawakian-Chinese, does the fact that they take place within China make them authentic, whilst those of the Sarawakian-Chinese inauthentic and bastardised?

Within tourism, it is often assumed that festivals, rituals, art and other cultural artifacts are judged as authentic or inauthentic based on the criteria of whether the objects or events are made or enacted by local people, according to their culture or tradition (Wang, 1999). It is also often assumed that traditional culture is more authentic than modern culture (Sharpley, 1994). These would imply that any events or objects from the ancestral homeland would be considered as authentic, while any traditional culture practiced there would also be more authentic than the contemporary culture in diasporic spaces.

In an analysis of tourist experiences, Wang (1999) identifies three types of authenticity: (1) objective authenticity; (2) constructive authenticity; and (3) existential authenticity. Objective authenticity refers to tourist experiences as being original and authentic, according to customs and traditions of local people. However, what is authentic is sometimes difficult to judge, as what is considered as an authentic experience by the tourists may not necessarily be considered so by the host. For example in Bali, ritual performances are performed in particular way which is understood to be authentic by the tourists but not necessarily by the local people (see Picard, 1996).

The type of experience described in Bali is representative of ‘constructive authenticity’, in which the experiences of the authentic are socially constructed and not objectively measurable. As
Bruner (1994: p.408) comments: ‘authenticity is no longer a property inherent in an object, forever fixed in time.’ It is based on the experiences and interpretations of different types of tourists, being a projection of tourists’ own beliefs, expectations, preferences, stereotyped images and consciousness onto toured objects, particularly onto toured ‘others’ (Bruner, 1991; Laxson, 1991; Silver, 1993).

The third category, ‘existential authenticity’ refers to the state of ‘being’, where one is true to oneself (Wang, 1999). Using Daniel's (1996) example of a tourism dance performance such as the rumba in Cuba, existential authenticity is derived from participation in the dance rather than merely being a spectator of it. It does not matter whether the dance routine was real or a re-enactment of the traditional rumba, but the fact that tourists participated in the dance, being in the culture, makes it real and authentic. Existential authenticity can be further divided into two different dimensions: intra-personal and inter-personal authenticity. Of these, the inter-personal authenticity is particularly relevant to this research. According to Wang (1999), family tourism is a typical example of experiencing inter-personal authenticity because the interaction is authentic, natural and emotional between friends or family members. Therefore, Wang (1999) argues that tourism is in itself an opportunity for a family to achieve or reinforce a sense of authentic togetherness and an authentic ‘we-relationship’.

In relevance to this research, authenticity is particularly important in exploring how diaspora engage with their family and friends and how they explore their cultural roots. Of particular relevance is also the notion that there is a perpetual fascination amongst the Chinese community, to consider that all things authentic must originate from China, both in terms of culture and identity (Ngan, 2007). It is therefore important to understand how diaspora use tourism as a means of exploring the ‘authentic self’ and ‘authentic culture’ to construct their identity.
4.6 Tourism and the Chinese community

To better understand how the (return) visit might be significant to the huaren community in Sarawak, this section examines research of the huaren communities in tourism. Given the emphasis placed by Confucian values on intergenerational relationships within the family and other social interpersonal relationships (Park and Cho, 1995), it is unsurprising that these influence the character of tourism in the community.

4.6.1 The influences of Confucianism in tourism

In most Chinese societies, the family has a very pervasive influence on the lives of each of its members as the Chinese community is fundamentally collectivist in nature, grounded in Confucianism. Principles of Confucianism include a respect for elders and of authority, and filial piety and reciprocity in human relationships. In order to understand the motivations and behaviour of tourists whose cultures are influenced by Confucianism, Sun and Tideswell, (2005) consider it essential to examine aspects of culture, lifestyle and family relationships. In the study of the Korean community conducted by Sun and Tideswell (ibid.), they discovered that the rules of the family suggest that decision making is a joint family process, including the decision to participate in travel and tourism. Given that Confucianism emphasises the importance of familial obligations, the needs of the family come before individual needs. Consequently, Sun and Tideswell’s (ibid.) study indicate that the Koreans feel guilty about travelling if they are not with their family, as it is time spent away from them, time that could have been used to fulfil familial obligations rather than pursuing leisurely activities.

Schutte and Ciarlante (1998) explain that the Chinese tend to place value on hard work, respect for learning and the need for an orderly society, elements central to Confucianism. These are in some ways contrary to the contemporary Western view of leisure being a reward or recompense for work because the Chinese view is that fulfilment comes through hard work alone (Manrai and Manrai, 1995). The amount of time available for leisure and tourism is commonly limited due to
the fact that family and social obligations must be met first. It can be argued that the practice of Confucianism with its emphasis on family obligation, work and study, does not leave much time for leisure activities, including tourism.

The importance of filial piety within Confucianism is underlined by Chen’s (1992) research on Taiwanese immigrant families in the United States. Even for important life decisions that extended into adulthood, including marriage, career and immigration, parents made decisions for their children or at least heavily influenced their decisions. Extending this analogy to tourism, it would be inconceivable for individuals to participate in tourism without the consent of their parents. Nor would, in a society that places high emphasis on filial piety and social obligation, tourism as understand in its Western context be a type of behaviour that would be necessarily regarded favourably.

Nevertheless, Chinese outbound tourism is increasing and Mok and Defranco (1999) investigated the linkages between the cultural values of the Chinese people and their preferences and expectations as international travellers. Their research found that the Confucian influence of the collective extended to tourism behaviour, with people preferring to travel in groups rather than individually. Emphasis was placed upon the value of group activities rather than personal gratification.

As with many aspects of attempting to understand Chinese communities, it is problematic to make over-generalised statements about their attitudes. Whilst some studies have found that Chinese communities do not seem inclined to participate in tourism (see Mok and DeFranco, 1999; Sun and Tideswell, 2005), other studies such as Jang et al. (2003) suggest that an innate cultural value placed on travel, pushes Chinese citizens to travel abroad. They argue that the Chinese value travel and tourism because it is through travel that the mind is broadened. The broadening of the mind and life-long learning is a principle that is inherent to Confucianism (Sun,
This process of learning through travel was found to be the principle motivating factor for the Chinese in China to visit Hong Kong, in this case for the purpose of learning about new technology (Zhang and Lam, 1999).

In summary, it is evident that the philosophy of Confucianism that is inherent to Chinese culture would seem to have three main influences on tourism behaviour within Chinese communities. There are: (i) to marginalise tourism as a hedonistic activity through which to pursue individual fulfilment; (ii) that decisions to travel should be collectively made within the family and tourism should be participated in primarily for the purpose of fulfilling familial obligations; and (iii) the extension of travel beyond the purpose of familial obligation should be for the purpose of broadening the mind and education.

4.6.2 The (return) visits to the homeland of the huaren

Since modern technology and a relative ease of travel have been made available to the majority, many huaren have had the opportunity to return to their ancestral homeland. Several studies have shown that huaren and huayi tend to travel back to their ancestral land as their principal choice of outbound destination (see Lew and Wong, 2004; Feng and Page, 2000), indicating that China remains significant to huaren communities. Since the Chinese place a heavy emphasis on family and family-related activities, VR is evidently the predominant purpose of travel amongst huaren and huayi (see Feng and Page, 2000), particularly when they travel to China. Return visits to the ancestral homeland is therefore a way of fulfilling the expected family requirements of being an ethnic Chinese.

Chinese culture has codified the structure of family relationships through the social philosophy of Confucianism, which established clear network loyalties and obligations in father-son, husband-wife and older siblings-younger sibling relationships. These obligations extend beyond the grave, as children have a filial duty to regularly pay respects and remembrances to both
immediate and more distant ancestors, including caring for grave sites located in China. Subsequently, no matter how far the Chinese diaspora has travelled, there is an obligation for them to return to their ancestral homeland to pay their respect to their ancestors.

According to Lew and Wong (2004), huaren who migrated during or prior to the 1950s are expected to participate in filial piety rights and network obligations, especially as part of their first visit back to the home village. This ritual typically includes: providing red envelopes (hung paos) containing money for all the relatives, which could be an entire village; providing roast pork for the ancestral grave visit; hiring lion dancers and setting off fire crackers for house and grave visits; and providing a feast for the extended family. The economic provision for all of these activities is expensive and Lew and Wong (ibid.) observe that the huaren are often welcomed ‘home’ by the local villagers and relatives, not just because of their blood relations with the ancestral community, but also because of their wealth and subsequent ability to economically benefit the ancestral community.

In exploring the experiences of huaren’s visits to China, Louie (2004) researched into the experiences of Chinese-American youths during their travel to mainland China, in search of their ancestral roots. Louie’s (2004) research focused on a programme called ‘In Search of Roots’, which is sponsored by the Chinese Historical Society of America and the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office in Guangdong Province of the People’s Republic of China. The programme aims to re-connect young Chinese-American adults of Cantonese descent to their ancestral villages in China’s Guangdong province through a visit programme. For the Chinese-Americans, this programme is an opportunity for them to explore their family history and genealogy, to visit their ancestral homeland, and to engage in identity exploration.

Louie’s (2004) work focuses on the ways that the Chinese-Americans re-mould their identities through visits to their ancestral villages in mainland China. These Chinese-Americans bring
meaning to their visits to ancestral villages in China based on their experiences in the United States and through the exercise of their historical imaginations (ibid.: p.344). They craft their relationships to their ancestral roots during their visits to China, which incorporate both their ancestral ties to Chinese villages and their continually changing identities as Chinese-Americans. While the first generation had maintained ties to China, through maintaining familial and social networks with their friends and relatives and/or sending remittances to their ancestral villages, subsequent generations have not continued these connections.

Although the ‘Search for Roots’ programme has created opportunities for new connections, it has also emphasised the disjunction that now separates the Chinese-Americans from China. Louie (ibid.) found that their sense of ‘in-between’ identity has made them feel ‘out of place’ in China. The essentialist approach to identity on the one hand involuntarily ties them to their places of origin in China through partial exclusion from American cultural citizenship, whilst on the other hand excluding them from ‘authentic’ Chinese identities because of their cultural, physical and temporal distance from their ancestral home(ibid.: p.350). As Louie (ibid.) argues, such portrayals of identity are disturbing in the sense that they imply that Chinese-Americans cannot form a complete identity without going to China, but that the identity that they have discovered through visiting there is somehow final.

Louie’s (ibid.) findings show that whilst many of the Chinese-Americans became more aware of their Chinese identity, they became even more aware of their Chinese-American identity. Similarly, the work of Maruyama and Stronza (2006) also indicates that the Chinese-Americans experienced their own ‘foreignness’ during their visits to China. They felt like ‘outsiders’ because they were not able to communicate in the Chinese language, lacking a sense of belonging to China. Taken that language has been perceived as ‘inseparable from ethnic and cultural identity’ (Koh, 1998: p.152), their inability to communicate in Chinese meant that they could not have insider access to the historical and cultural heritage of China. It is therefore suggested that
‘cultural identification’ and intimacy with China are dependent upon language and literacy abilities.

4.7 Conclusion

Travel and tourism have crucial roles to play in the reflexive processes of learning and self-discovery that define the fluid, constantly unfolding nature of diasporic identities (Hollinshead, 1998). Since it is suggested that diasporic communities be interpreted as hybridised, it can not be assumed that the identity of the diaspora and those in the ancestral homeland are homogenous. Thus, perhaps ironically, the search by diaspora for those who are similar through ethnic tourism may result in the discovery of ‘others’.

Specifically in the context of diaspora tourism, the motivations for visiting the ancestral homeland have been emphasised as both (re)enhancing familial and social relationships and also (re)discovering one’s cultural roots. Thus travel and tourism may be used by diasporas to visit the ancestral homeland for the purpose of constructing, de-constructing and reconstructing their identity, whilst simultaneously familiarising themselves with their cultural roots.

This voyage of travel to the homeland subsequently becomes one that involves understanding one’s identity, which may be tied to the ‘homeland’ or the new country of settlement or both places, demonstrating a confusion that can be inherent to hybridity. While some studies have indicated that travel to the diaspora’s ancestral homeland has enhanced a sense of identity and belonging (see Stephenson, 2002; Duval, 2003; Nguyen and King, 1998), the experiences of visiting ancestral homeland may also lead to sentiments of displacement (O’Connor, 2005). For example in the case of huaren, some studies have indicated that travelling to China has heightened the sense of a hybridised Chinese identity rather than strengthening an identity of belonging to the ancestral homeland (Louie, 2004; Ang, 2001; Kibria, 2003). The (return) visits
by the *huaren* to their ancestral homeland have thus challenged self-perceptions of identity and the relationships they have with the peoples and places of their ancestral homeland.
CHAPTER FIVE:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter:

- justifies the use of the interpretive paradigm as the philosophical framework;
- evaluates the significance of interpretive ethnography to the research inquiry;
- explores suitable research methods and sampling techniques to fulfill the objectives of the study; and
- presents an exposition of the data collection and analytical procedures undertaken to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative research.

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section of Chapter Five is to justify the theoretical paradigm that informs this research. The ontological positioning of the researcher is a recognition that the social world is different from the natural world and subsequently research design and strategies need to reflect this paradigm. As this research examines how travel and tourism influence the identity of the Chinese in Sarawak, it posits firstly that the identity of Chinese is socially constructed and secondly, that travel and tourism play a significant role in the identity formation of the Sarawakian-Chinese community, with particular reference to the (return) visits to their ancestral homeland. In essence, this study is primarily concerned with the Chinese subjective understandings of their identities through tourism participation.

5.2 Interpretive paradigm

As previously stated, identity is not a fixed entity and travel and tourism have contributed significantly to the pluralisation and hybridisation of people, places and past (Urry, 1990). Consequently, the subjectivity of how identity and immediate environment are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed are of importance to this research. Therefore, given the nature
of this study, an interpretive paradigm as opposed to a positivist paradigm is determined to be the best and preferred philosophical justification for this research. The interpretive approach to understanding and investigating the social world is based upon a philosophy that individuals routinely interpret and make sense of their worlds (Denzin, 1989a; 1989b, 1989c), hence social science research, must seek to relate these interpretations to the everyday situations in which people live (Burns, 1997; Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989; Wiersma, 1995).

Historically, the dominant paradigm of social science research was positivism. Positivism embraces a view of the world as being guided by scientific rules that explain the behaviour of phenomena through causal relationships (Jennings, 2001: p. 35). It is based on the assumption that the social world can be isolated and repeatable procedures can be used to produce the same results. The same paradigm has been commonly used in tourism research studies, given a focus on the analysis of tourist patterns and the examination of the trends of tourist behaviours (Riley and Love, 2000). For example, positivist paradigms have been used to classify tourist behaviour into a range of categories for the purpose of typologies and subsequently predicting future trends. However, Phillimore and Goodson (2004) argue that this types of research that aims to produce typologies serves only to strengthen the stereotyping of tourists. They also suggest that positivism fails to capture the complexities of the social world and the interconnected relationships between people and their environment.

The comprehension of the social world as been different from the natural world, renders the positivist paradigm as insufficient, as a paradigm of analysis. In the context of tourism, behaviour, the motivations and experiences of travel are not necessarily predictable and causal relationships may be undeterminable. Subsequently, more flexible and subjective approaches are required to understand the changing nature of tourist identities, behaviours, motivations and experiences. The subjective understanding of identities is of particular relevance to this research, hence, an interpretive paradigm is suggested to be the best approach.
According to Guba and Lincoln (1994: p.105), a paradigm is defined as: ‘the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigation.’ There are three main elements to an inquiry paradigm: epistemology, ontology and methodology. The ontological considerations of this research give rise to epistemological assumptions which have methodological implications for the choice of the particular techniques of data collection used (Cohen and Manion, 2000; Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989). In order to justify the use of an interpretive paradigm, the following section examines how each of these assumptions is reflected in the research study.

5.2.1 Ontological assumption

Ontology is the study of being and explores the questions concerning the nature of reality. Positivists argue that the existence and reality of the world are independent from human existence, regarding the world as dualistic in nature, which means they can separate themselves from it and attempt to consider the world objectively (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). In contrast, the ontological assumption of interpretive paradigm considers the world as an object of focus to be inseparable from those observing it. Instead of considering the world objectively as independent observers, interpretivists posit that the world is subjectively known. Subjective characteristics reflect the observer’s interpretation of the world. Interpretivists also argue that there is no single interpretation but every interpretation is subject to the influences and perspectives of different observers (Padget and Allen, 1997; Patton, 2002; Pritcharad and Morgan, 2003).

Since the underlying ontological assumption of an interpretive paradigm constitutes more than one interpretation of the world, there is, logically, more than one reality. It posits that reality is not objective, single and divisible but socially constructed, multiple, holistic and contextual (Ozanne and Hudson, 1989). As this study is concerned with the way in which individuals construct their identity in relation to tourism participation, the individuals’ subjective experiences of their world are therefore paramount to this research. Since the meanings of being Chinese differ from one person to another, their experiences with their ancestral homeland are also subject to different
interpretations. Therefore, this paradigm allows for flexibilities to work within these interpretations and realities.

This research does not subscribe to the assumption that the Chinese are a homogenous group and therefore would share similar tourism experiences. Subsequently, in order to attain multiple realities through different interpretations of experiences, this research takes into account the different constructs of events of individuals within the Chinese community in Sarawak. The ontological assumption of the interpretive paradigm of this research, proposes that ‘individuals within’ the Chinese community in Sarawak interpret their sense of ‘Chineseness’ differently, as is discussed in Chapter Two.

5.2.2 Epistemological assumption

The term epistemology comes from the Greek word *epistêmê* meaning ‘knowledge’. Central to the positivist epistemology is the assumption that objective knowledge of the world can be gained by separating the observer from what is observed (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). It is argued that by objectifying the world, including cultures, societies, geographies and people, the knowledge of the world can be discovered and verified through direct observations (Galani-Moutafi, 2000; Wearing and Wearing, 2001). Contrary to the positivist paradigm, the epistemology of interpretive paradigm argues that objective understanding of the world cannot be attained. According to Burrell and Morgan (1979: p.28):

‘The interpretive paradigm is informed by a concern to understand the world as it is, to understand the fundamental nature of the social world at the level of subjective experience. It seeks explanation within the realm of individual consciousness and subjectivity, within the frame of reference of the participant as opposed to the observer of action.’

It is argued that within the epistemological assumption of interpretivism, the best way to understand any phenomenon is to be ‘within the frame of reference of the participant’. In order to do so, it is crucial to obtain ‘*verstehen*’, where the observer enters the social setting and
becomes one of the social actors of that environment (Blumer, 1962). The purpose of becoming one of the social actors is to ‘place oneself in the position of other people to see what meanings they give to their actions’ (Abercrombie et al., 1994: p.477). It emphasises the relationship between the researcher and the researched not as objective but rather as subjective, interactive and co-operative (Decrop, 2004).

In order to obtain ‘verstehen’, this research employs the use of an interpretive ethnography (see Section 5.3) as a means to enter the social setting being studied. Key methods include the use of: (i) semi-structured interviews as means to interact with the participants and to gain better and deeper perspectives from the participants (Guba and Lincoln, 1994); and (ii) participant-observation through which the researcher also gains knowledge by participating in the lived experiences of the research participants. Both semi-structured interviews and participant-observation are examined in Section 5.5.

There is also an inherent acceptance within the interpretive paradigm that the researcher’s own experiences in the field should also be taken into account. Since the researcher is inescapably part of the social world that he or she is researching, it is suggested that the researcher may also influence the research process (Marshall and Rossman, 1999; Cohen and Manion, 2000). Therefore the researcher’s reflexive exercise in the form of a journal and field notes are also included as part of the underlying epistemological assumption of this paradigm. The significance of employing the researcher’s reflexivity as part of the research process is discussed in Section 5.4.

5.2.3 Methodological assumptions

Central to this research is the relationship of experiences that are constructed and established between people and places, a relationship that is not readily quantifiable or measurable. Therefore, an interpretive paradigm that is informed by the use of a qualitative methodology is considered the best approach for this research. Methodology is the study of the procedures and methods which are used to obtain knowledge (Polkinghorne, 1983), involving the specifying of
how evidence is collected and why it is gathered. By asking the questions of why and how, the relationship between the method used to collect evidence and its explanation, interpretation or understanding of what is examined is considered (MacDonald et al., 2000). Method, on the other hand, is defined as: ‘the tools or instruments employed by researchers to gather empirical evidence or to analyse data’ (Sarantakos, 1998: p.32). The interpretive paradigm is typified in its methods by the use of qualitative techniques including ethnography, case study analysis, document or historical analysis and life histories. Of particular interest to this research is the use of interpretive ethnography which is discussed in Section 5.3.

As stated, this study employs a qualitative methodological approach because it seeks to collect rich descriptions of the Chinese tourism experiences, particularly their (return) visits to their ancestral homeland. Since the meanings of being Chinese are not fixed, the Chinese tourism experiences in their homeland could be expected to have implications upon their identity formation. The qualitative approach emphasises interpretation of the world by the researched, in order to bring meaning and understanding to different phenomena as seen by the people who experience them. The rationale for using qualitative methodology is to provide contextual information and a rich insight into human behaviour (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). For example, Ali (2008) adopted a qualitative methodological approach to investigate the significance of a Pakistani ethnic identity upon tourism journeys within a Pakistani community in UK. Her rationale for using this approach was to develop an understanding of the meaning and significance of tourism participation in diasporic and ethnic communities. A quantitative methodological approach would not have allowed her to collect rich descriptions of tourism participation in the Pakistani community because according to Ali (2008), quantitative research practice presents little or no opportunities for the meanings, motives and actions of the research participants to be retained and to be interpreted. How people make sense of their experiences is often not quantifiable, and therefore the use of qualitative methodology is considered an appropriate approach to understand people’s interpretations of their experiences.
It is not the aim of this research to produce a set of Chinese characteristics or seek out profiles that might enable future prediction of human behaviour and reasoning. In using a qualitative methodology, the focus is not to seek out generalisations or patterns across the narratives; instead the focus allows individual stories to be told. Where generalisation occurs, it is because the narratives speak to other readers about their own experiences, our lives are thus particular and yet generalisable (Ellis, 1997). Although threads of similarity and difference may be present in the narratives, it is not the intention of this study to produce a monolithic Sarawakian-Chinese experience. Instead these narratives capture ‘conjuncture moments’ (Probyn, 1993, p. 99) which are singular and context-bound, driven by geographical, historical and political factors governing the Chinese people’s lives. The experiences paint lives that show that even in hybridity there is heterogeneity (Meerwald, 2002). In keeping with the research paradigm, it is maintained that the qualitative methodological approach using interpretive ethnography is the best approach for this research study. The significance of using this approach is further examined in the following section.

5.3 Interpretive ethnography

An interpretive ethnographical approach using qualitative research methods has direct application to this research, since this approach is commonly used in ethnographic studies of culture, travel and tourism (Bruner, 1995; Geertz, 1973). It accepts reality as being socially constructed and situated, being relative to a specific context (Cohen et al., 2000), concepts which have particular relevance for this research. Accordingly, an ethnographer is one who ‘participates, overtly and covertly in people’s daily lives, watching, listening, collecting whatever data are available, to throw light on the issues with which the ethnographer is concerned’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: p.2). In other words, ethnography is an approach that requires a researcher to immerse themselves in a social setting for an extended period of time in order to understand the culture of its people.
The purpose of being immersed in the field is to gain a better understanding of the cultural practices of the people studied and thereby producing ‘thick descriptions’ of ‘the multiplicity of complex conceptual structures’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: p.21). This is facilitated by making regular observations of the behaviour of the subjects being studied, thereby developing an understanding of the meanings of behaviour and actions (Neuman, 1994; Berg, 2004; Punch, 2005). The interpretive element of ethnography is emphasised by Mason (2002: p. 56) who comments: ‘[ethnography] sees people and their interpretations, perceptions, meanings and understandings as the primary data source.’

In ethnography, ‘thick description’ is not only observing and describing what human beings do in detail but doing so in a way that recognizes that the description takes place under special conditions, thereby emphasising the understanding and the meaning of what they do (see Geertz, 1973). The difference between a ‘thick description’ as opposed to a ‘thin description’ is that the latter is purely factual in nature while the former is enriched by personal experience (Descombes, 2002). Therefore, in order for a researcher to obtain ‘thick descriptions’ it is imperative that ethnographic work be based on intensive fieldwork to analyse the culture being studied. Thus, it can be postulated that through the employment of interpretive ethnography, the researcher can ‘get to the heart of a culture’ (Clifford, 1988: p. 31).

A ‘thick description’ is important in the work of ethnography, focusing on how actions and behaviours are given meanings and interpretations. Gubrium and Holstein (1997) acknowledge that what is observed in the field, as well as the account they give about their observations, are socially constructed. As Geertz (1973: p.9) explains ethnography is: ‘our own constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to’, in other words, ethnography is concerned with the work of ‘interpretations of interpretation’ (ibid.: p.14). It is for this reason that ethnography is criticised because according to Walle (1997), studies which seek
to expose multiple interpretations, perspectives and personal opinions, have frequently been accused of being insufficiently rigorous and overly subjective or 'non-scientific'.

Therefore, in order to substantiate the use of ethnography, it is noted that the underlying ontological assumption of interpretive ethnography posits that there is no existence of one ‘reality’, subsequently, ‘there is doubt that any discourse has a privileged place, any method or theory a universal and general claim to authoritative knowledge’ (Richardson, 1991: p.173). In this view there is no privileged explanation, no basis on which to judge one perspective or interpretation as being more correct or truer than another; there are only perspectives and interpretations.

In addition, by shifting towards ‘pluralistic, interpretive, open-ended perspectives’ (Denzin, 1996: p.135), ethnography also highlights the subjectivity of the researcher and the humanising of those being researched. Instead of gazing upon the researched as either ‘exotic’, ‘objectified’ or ‘mythical’, Shweder (1996: p.24) argues that ‘a true ethnographer is one that is able to represent the ‘other as different and not odd, as intelligible and fully human but human in a different sort of way’. Consequently, theories are now read in narrative terms, as tales from the field (Van Maanen, 1989) of both the ethnographers of those being researched. Based on that understanding, this research study incorporates both the voice of the Sarawakian-Chinese and also the voice of the researcher. In doing so, it presents the subjects as active participants in constructing their own identity.

5.4 **Researcher reflexivity**

Reflexivity refers to ‘the sense of seriously locating [oneself] in [one’s] research’ (Williams, 1990: p.254) and subsequently involves subjectivity, namely the social situatedness of the self. According to Jennings (2005), in qualitative interviews, the researcher assumes a subjective
position and as a consequence of this epistemological stance will engage in reflexivity throughout the entire research process. She (ibid), further explains that reflexivity is the process by which researchers reflect on the impacts of their personal subjectivity and the consequences of their participation upon the research process, reporting this in their writings.

As the ethnographers' background and the subjects being studied are not independent of each other in the field of research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995), the involvement and detachment of ethnographers has direct relevance to the way ethnographers construct and interpret their data. Consequently, it is not possible to reach an unadulterated observation that is totally objective (Brewer, 2000; Dey, 1993) because researchers bring with them a mix of a belief system, cultural values and ideology. Therefore, Okely (1996: p.10) argues that 'the specificity and individuality of the observer are ever present and must therefore be acknowledged, explored and put to creative use'. Based on the above discussion, throughout the research, the researcher adopted a reflexive stance, by attempting to be transparent about her background and in the way in which she interprets her data.

Jamal and Hollinshead (2001) argue that it is inevitable that the researcher’s personal biography and cultural background play a significant role in shaping the way in which the phenomenon being studied is interpreted and constructed. In essence, reflexivity entails engaging in critical appraisal of one’s own practice and also reflecting on the way in which the research is carried out (Hardy et al., 2001). In this case, given that the researcher is Sarawakian-Chinese, she is both exploring the identity of her own people and her own identity within the research process.

Examples of researchers who engage their own identities as part of the research process include Cole (2004) who wrote herself into the text while examining some of the issues of tourism development in Indonesia. She reflected on her changing identities as being a white female tour operator, to being a researcher. She also examined her own personal identity as a white English
woman married to an Indonesian man and later becoming a mother of their child. These changing identities impacted on the way she was perceived by the local people and the way they behaved towards her. Similarly in her work with the Pakistani community in Bury Park, Ali (2008) also reflected on her identity as a single, Muslim woman, while examining the significance of ethnic identity upon tourism participation within this community. Both Cole (2004) and Ali (2008) acknowledge their own identity and experiences as significant in influencing the research process. Following this justification of employing interpretive ethnography and exploring the significance of researcher reflexivity, the following section examines suitable research methods and sampling techniques to fulfil the objectives of this study.

5.5 Research methods

The work of ethnography entails the extended involvement of the researcher in the social life of those they study (Bryman, 2004). Therefore, this section discusses the tactics and strategies of gaining access to research settings and subsequently considers issues of sampling in view of technique, criteria and procedure in the conduct of interpretive ethnographic study.

5.5.1 Gaining entry through ‘quanxi’ (social networking)

In order to have access into a community for the purpose of researching, it is important that a researcher has knowledge about the people being studied. Being able to understand and comprehend its social structure, customs, cultural habits and nuances is important for gaining access into the community and gaining its trust. The accounts of ethnographers gaining access into their research setting vary from situation to situation (see Bryman, 2004) and therefore, Shaffir (1980) called on ethnographers to remain flexible concerning entry tactics and strategies.

Within a Chinese community, the concept of social-networking or quanxi is a form of social network that contextualises individuals within a highly collectivist society (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 2000). Guanxi has often been considered a major difference between Eastern and Western social order philosophy and world view (Haley et al., 1998), as Luo (1997: p.2)
explains: ‘the Chinese word ‘guanxi’ refers to the concept of drawing on connections in order to secure favours in personal relations’. Thus for an ethnographer to gain access into a Chinese community, it is important that he/she understands and establishes *guanxi*, utilising personal contacts to establish a wider network.

The initial step of establishing *guanxi* is important and typically family, colleagues and classmates are automatically considered to be ‘insiders’, thereby inferring a degree of reciprocal and automatic trust (Gu, 1990; Gao and Ting-Toomey, 1998). However, *guanxi* is also transferable, for example if person A knows person B and C, then B and C are socially obligated because they are part of the same network, even if they only have a common friend in person A. Within the Chinese community the issue of ‘trust’ is of critical importance for social networking and individuals are more likely to be confident and open to people they know or have been introduced through a known contact (Usunier, 2005).

*Guanxi* relationships and their associated reciprocal obligations are often used within Chinese society to leverage social resources for personal and group advantages (Lew and Wong (2004: p.203). The major function of *guanxi* relationships according to Gao and Ting-Toomey (1998) is the sharing of information, as one is culturally obligated to share important information with those who are considered to be insiders. Chu and Ju (1993) observe that outsider relationships are less worthy of trust and are unstable, therefore one is not morally obligated in the same way to those who are outsiders as those who are insiders (Hwang, 1987). For this reason, the researcher started this research with the established *guanxi*, by working within the webs of connection via relatives and friends.

5.5.2 Sampling techniques and criteria

Once these *guanxi* were established, it was decided that the use of non-random sampling techniques, more specifically snowballing sampling, was the obvious choice of technique for this
research. Given that the Sarawakian-Chinese community is a close-knitted, snowball sampling’s reliance on a participant recruitment technique makes it a suitable option as it is reliant on contact networks for sourcing potential informants. Furthermore, snowballing sampling is sometimes the best way to locate subjects with characteristics necessary to a study (Berg, 2004: p.36), in this case the Chinese community in Sarawak. Snowball samples are also particularly popular among researchers interested in studying various classes of deviance, sensitive topics or difficult to reach populations (Lee, 1993). Although this research topic may not strictly fall into these categories, it could be argued that the issue of ‘identity’ is sensitive, given that the Malay Constitution privileges the Malays ethnic group as discussed in Section 2.4. Consequently, in order to gain access to the Chinese community, snowballing permits the researcher to establish acquaintances, thus allowing trust to be more easily gained.

To establish boundaries of who could or could not be participants in the study, interviewees had to satisfy all the following key requirements:

1. be a citizen of Malaysia;

2. be aged 18 years and above for reasons of access and ethics;

3. their ethnic origin must be of Chinese descent; and

4. they must have visited China at least once.

However, it is also recognised that this technique runs the risk of sampling homogenous groups of people who might share similar experiences because they happen to know one another (see Jordan and Gibson, 2003). Therefore, in order to avoid sampling ‘like-minded’ Chinese, participants were sourced from a variety of networks. Once the networks were established, to further the interpretive ethnography approach, semi-structured interviews and participant-observation methods were employed in this research. The following section examines the
significance of using semi-structured interviews, while participant-observation is explored in Section 5.5.4.

5.5.3 Semi-structured Interviews

Seidman (1998: p. 3) explains that at the root of interviewing is: ‘an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience.’ Therefore in order to understand the experiences of the Chinese in Sarawak and the meanings they attach to tourism participation, the use of interviews is seen as the best method of gathering qualitative experiential data. In recognising the significance of interviews, there are at least three major categories of interviews: structured, unstructured and semi-structured.

The structured interview is the most rigidly constructed form, designed to elicit information using a set of predetermined questions, exactly as worded. Researchers who employ this technique would often have fairly solid ideas about the things they want to uncover during the interview (Merriam, 2001; Schwartz and Jacobs, 1979). In contrast to the structured interview, the unstructured interview begins with the assumption that the interviewer does not know in advance all the necessary questions. Questions are often generated and developed during the course of field research to augment field observations (Berg, 2004). Semi-structured interviews on the other hand involve the implementation of a number of predetermined questions. However, interviewers are allowed the freedom to explore further beyond the predetermined questions and seek clarification of issues.

Following consideration of the characteristics referred to in the last paragraph, it is considered that semi-structured interviews are most suitable to this research. Firstly, the employment of structured interviews is not appropriate in this research because it was not certain what questions would be needed to unlock the data to meet the aim and objectives of the research study. Secondly, the unstructured interview was thought to be unsuitable for this research because it was possible to develop questions from the theoretical framework. Consequently, the
semi-structured interview was thought to be the most appropriate because it was also congruent with the interpretive paradigm.

Semi-structured interviews also allow for comparability between interviewees as relatively similar questions are being asked. Importantly for the gaining of confidence and trust of the respondents, the use of semi-structured interviews in the context of the inherent subjective epistemological paradigm, enables a rapport to be established with the interviewees (Jennings, 2001). Subsequently, this method allows for the researcher to build up rapport with the interviewees to discuss complex issues such as identity. Further, detailed information regarding attitudes, opinions and values of the interviewees could be explored as opposed to using scales that tend to reduce the interviewee’s experiences to numeric positions along a continuum (ibid.). According to Jennings (2001: p.104), ‘the use of semi-structured interviews is associated with the interpretive paradigm which holds an ontology that recognises multiple perspectives in regard to the research focus. It provides an epistemological stance that is subjective in nature and a methodology which is predicated on qualitative principles.’

Although the semi-structured interview is most appropriate for this research, this method has also its disadvantages. Of particular significance is the issue of replication, since the social interaction between the researcher and the researched may not necessary be the same every time, being influenced by the type of day, research setting and the social circumstances surrounding both the researcher and the researched (Jennings, 2001). In order to overcome the issue of replication, several techniques may be used to ensure the reliability and validity or in this case the trustworthiness of the research method. These techniques are further discussed in Section 5.7.
A. The structure of the semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interview consisted of five main sections as shown in Appendix 1. The first section focuses on determining the significance of travel and tourism amongst the Sarawakian-Chinese. This section also establishes the motivation for the travel and thereby provides insight into their concept of tourism. The second section focuses on the travel experiences of the Sarawakian-Chinese to China and involves discussions with interviewees on a number of issues including: the motivation for (re)visiting China; the importance of (re)visiting China; the existence of relatives in China and the significance of maintaining links with relatives. The third section investigates issues related to the concept of ‘home’, the meanings of which were explained in Section 3.5. Questions included the significance of ‘place’, particularly how places of birth and residence influence conceptions of home. The fourth section requires the interviewees to be reflexive upon their personal identity as Chinese or Sarawakian-Chinese; the interviewees are also asked about identity in relation to the (return) visit to China. The final section includes questions concerning interviewee’s gender, age and generations as part of gathering the demographic profile of those who visited China.

B. Interviews with photographs

Although the use of images is not a main research method in this study, they have been used as a resource for the study. The use of visual images is mostly used as an adjunct to other traditional methods of data collection such as ethnography and interviews (Harrison, 2002). In this research, the primary use of images was to act as a form of trigger or memory-prompting tool to elicit information from the researched, vis-a-vis a form of representation capable of narration in its own right. For example, Winckler (cited in Harrison, 2002) used a variety of techniques to study the experiences and identity of immigrant women in Toronto. She found photographs triggered memories which led to stories of people and places. These stories would start from the original photography and often would lead to somewhere completely different which are not shown on the photography. This suggests that stories that are triggered by a certain aspect of
the image can lead to stories that have wider implications and relevance to the topic being discussed. This form of inquiry necessarily falls into the frame of semi-structured interview where the answers can go beyond the predetermined questions.

In another similar experiment Hagedorn (1994) used photographs as part of the interview sessions while working with families with chronic illness. The use of photographs prompted ‘spontaneous story telling’ (ibid.: p.48) and also provided further opportunities for participants to reveal meaning about an experience. It is the reflexivity between image and verbalisation that produces the data for the investigator. The use of such technique is termed by Harrison (2002) as ‘photo-elicitation technique’. In the context of tourism studies however, it is not common to find this technique being used in eliciting memories of tourism experiences, although photography and tourism are widely considered to be intrinsically linked. As Haldrup and Larsen (2003: p.23) both argue that despite the fact that ‘taking photographs is an emblematic tourist practice and that tourist studies have been dominated by a visual paradigm of gazing, little sustained research has explored the general connections between tourism and popular photography.’ More commonly, photographs are examined alongside the promotion of tourism destination in which tourist photographs both reflect and inform destination images (see Garrod, 2009; Hunter, 2008).

In relation to this research, photographs are used as tools to elicit memory, asking interviewees to interpret images of themselves/ and/or others and of places/spaces or things. The idea of memory is an important aspect in many of the interviewees’ perceptions of the photograph, helping to make reference in the present to the past and past associations. According to Harrison (2002: p.104), “such fragments allow for a construction and reconstruction of biographical narratives, a piecing together and re-ordering of ‘moments’.” Thus it would seem that for individuals and for researchers, photographs provide a basis for narrative work; there are stories about photographs, and there are stories that lie behind them and between them. In
other words, photographs are used to refresh or preserve memories, to illustrate life, to provide a way of communicating who they are and where they have come from (ibid.).

However, questions remain as how well people can remember their experiences by looking at photographs of their travel experiences. As Dex (1991) argues, over time true meanings are likely to have been lost or altered, some bias or lack of clarity of certain events are most likely to occur. However, as much as meaning can be altered or changed over time, it is suggested that clarity can also be achieved over time (see Sontag, 1979). In retrospect as individuals live through different experiences, meanings of the past could potentially be re-evaluated and become clearer. In other words, photographs allow them to develop better understandings of the past and also allow individuals to become aware of different versions of ‘truth’. It is also important to note that photographs are not used to test how much interviewees remember the past, or how accurate they could recall past events, but to stimulate their memories and construct events that might have relevance to their identity construction.

5.5.4 Participant-observation

Besides semi-structured interviews, interpretive ethnography is also typified by the use of the participant-observation method. Belsky (2004: p.277) explains that: “‘participant-observation’ refers to the method used by researchers making observations in the course of taking part in the activities of the people they study.” The reason for employing this method is because interviewees are not always able to articulate their experiences and their feelings. Consequently participant-observation helps where there are inadequate words to express experiences (Goulding, 2000).

There are several roles which ethnographers can play within the participant-observation technique. Junker (1960) categorises participant-observation into four roles: the ‘complete observer’, the ‘observer as participant’, the ‘participant as observer’ and the 'complete
participant’. ‘Complete observer’ is where the researcher does not interact with people, whilst the ‘observer as participant’ is where the researcher is mainly an interviewer, some observation occurs but there is very little if any participation. The ‘participant as observer’ is similar to ‘complete participant’ but members of the social setting are aware of the researcher’s status. The researcher is engaged in regular interaction with people and participates in their daily lives. The ‘complete participant’ is a fully functioning member of the social setting and conceals his or her true identity to its members.

In this research, the researcher functioned in different roles but the role as a researcher remained covert. The rationale for using the unobtrusive-observational technique is to allow for a non-intrusive manner of observing tourists’ behaviours without manipulation or stimulation (Adler and Adler, 1994). The non-intrusive nature of observation allows the researcher to ensure that the tourists’ usual activities and natural behaviour are not affected (Angrosino and de Perez, 2000; Locke et al., 2000). The researcher, as an unobtrusive observer, who maintains a covert role also ensures that distortions to the research findings are not introduced because of confusion over the researcher’s role within the study (Glesne, 1999).

Participant-observation also places the researcher into the context under investigation which leads to ‘revelatory incidents,’ nuances of behaviour and culture that might otherwise be missed. In her work of observing English people in Spain, O’Reilly (2000: p.10) argues that ‘participant-observation requires interpretation, understanding and empathy and not merely observation, notation and enumeration of people’s behaviour.’ In this study, all the behavioural observations were recorded in a fieldwork notebook, a procedure advocated by Holliday (2002) as a means of creating a dialogue between the researcher and the research setting.

Seaton (2002), in his exploratory study of a touring group, differentiates his ethnographic observation into two contrasting contexts: opened- and closed-field. The closed-field context
involves participant-observation where the researcher and the subjects being studied ‘conjointly exist with a discrete, temporal and spatial setting as co-actors in a drama’ (Seaton, 2002: p.311). Examples given include any tour group that travel together by car, train or air and living together for a period of time in common accommodation. The opened-field context, on the other hand, occurs when the researcher and the researched are not confined within a spatial and temporal context but exist as separate and independent actors (ibid), such as participating and observing the everyday experiences of people in a village. By understanding the two contrasting field contexts, Seaton (2002) suggests that it is possible to identify the opportunities and problems they pose for the ethnographic observer of tourist.

Conducting fieldwork within the environment of a closed-field context created an environment that is enclosed and bounded. Of relevance to this research is the closed-field observation which allowed the researcher to observe a tour group to China without intruding on the participants’ holiday plans. The advantage of this method for any ethnographer is it allows the researcher to explore a group of people as a mobile laboratory and at the same time observe how tour members’ experience and engage the outside world within a safe and non-intrusive environment. Further the struggle to gain access into a community and its acceptance is lessened in this context, because everyone who joined the package tour started off as outsiders, who later became insiders by membership of the package tour (see Seaton, 2002).

However, Jennings (2001) observes that participant-observation does not work well in large groups, as the observer can only be in one location at one time. When group members are separated, it is difficult to observe all members, thus valuable data may be lost. She also argues that while this method provides valuable data, there are risks of biases from the researcher(s). Researcher(s) could potentially be selective in their observations or misinterpret phenomena if analyses are not revalidated by the participants. Further, replication is also impossible because
once an act or phenomenon has occurred it is not repeatable. However, it is also important to note that the use of this method, in this research is part of a triangulation of methods.

5.6 The Research process
This section explains the process of application of the methods in the pilot and main studies of the research.

5.6.1 Getting started: the pilot study
Following the researcher’s initial discussions with relatives and friends, contacts were made with individuals who were Sarawakian-Chinese and who had visited China. A body of trusted interviewees was established during the ‘pilot study’ carried out in August 2005 over a period of three weeks. During the pilot fieldwork, semi-structured interviews were conducted in private residences and also in public settings, e.g. cafes and restaurants, involving a total of 10 respondents all over 18 years of age. Owing to varying levels of language competencies, the interviews were conducted in English, Mandarin and the Chinese dialects of Hokkien and Foochow.

The role of kinship and friendship networks (guanxi) of the Chinese community proved to be very useful in establishing a sample of key informants. These trusted acquaintances subsequently introduced their friends and relatives to participate in the ‘main’ interviews conducted in three stages. The first stage was conducted for a period of four months from September 2005 to January 2006; the second stage was carried out eleven months later for three weeks and the last stage was conducted in February 2008 for a period of three weeks. This method of ‘snowball sampling’ proved to be a suitable method for contacting people who were thought to be relevant to the research, not least because of the close-knitted character of the Chinese community. As a consequence of conducting the pilot study, some of the participants became important
informants in the main research. It was also through the informants that *guanxi* with other Sarawakian-Chinese citizens was established.

There were several reasons why conducting a pilot study was necessary before launching the research. One of the aims of conducting the pilot study was to ensure that the semi-structured interview was well designed and understood by potential respondents. Although the researcher is familiar with the culture of the people, it was necessary to ensure that nothing was assumed and the information gathered could be used to inform the main study of the research. According to Bryman (2004), the role of piloting is to ensure that the research instrument as a whole functions well. A key aim of the pilot study was to ascertain that the questions asked were unambiguous and clear. It also enabled the researcher to practice her interview technique before conducting the main survey.

As a consequence of conducting the pilot study, some of the original questions asked in the pilot study (shown in Appendix 2) were changed for the main study. The changes were necessary because several themes that were generated produced only thin descriptions that lacked the quality of data to be theoretically and interpretively analysed. The amended questions and the rationale for changing these questions are included in Appendix 3.

During the stage of conducting the pilot study, it was discovered that the researcher’s identity has implication upon how she is accepted as part of the community. Therefore, the researcher’s personal reflexivity also takes into consideration the role(s) played during the interviews, as an ‘insider’ (*emic*) or ‘outsider’ (*etic*). During the research my ethnicity, age, religion and educational background proved to be significant characteristics in the protocol of the interviews. The researcher was aware that her identity and cultural background as a Sarawakian-Chinese bestowed the status of being an ‘insider’. The inconspicuous character of the researcher’s identity helped to build trust and gave access into people’s homes. As an insider, establishing a rapport with the participants was also relatively easy. Being of similar ethnicity as the research subjects also allowed the researcher to interpret the nuances of the local Chinese dialects and
Malaysian-English language systems and understand the cultural idiosyncrasies of the Chinese community. However, the researcher was also conscious that as an insider there was a risk of being over-assuming in the meaning and implication of what the respondents were saying. The process of double-checking is further discussed in Section 5.7.

Conversely, being a researcher from a Western university sometimes meant being treated as an ‘outsider’ (etic), with some interviewees seeming to think that the researcher did not understand her own culture. For example, it seemed often that when questions concerning Chinese culture arose, the researcher was informed of the importance of Chinese culture. The researcher was often told ‘...because you have lived overseas for so long, you probably don’t even practice your Chinese culture...’, indicating a belief amongst some interviewees that the researcher’s absence from her own country has caused a loss of familiarity with her own culture. During the course of the interviews, the researcher was made acutely aware of how far distant the researcher was from several of her interviewees in terms of knowledge of Chinese culture and heritage. The researcher sometimes had to be ‘re-educated’ by the respondents about the Chinese culture and its importance, before the interviews could proceed. Being ‘re-educated’ by the interviewees was seemingly a form of ‘re-initiation’ back into the culture, a shifting from an etic to an emic position.

One of the best methods this researcher found to maintain an emic identity was to find a context of commonality with the interviewees. For example, all the interviews were conducted in the interviewees’ native language, which helped bridge any perceived cultural gap and to establish a good rapport. In order to maintain that sense of commonality, interviewees were asked to select the language(s) that made them feel most relaxed, enabling them to describe their feelings, thoughts and experiences without inhibition.

Chinese society is stratified by seniority, professional standing, education and power (Schutte and Ciarlante, 1998) and therefore proper conduct according to interviewee’s social status was
important in the interview sessions. For example, appropriate salutation should be used, therefore background investigations of the interviewees were important establishing the expected Chinese social protocol. For example, while interviewing an important Chinese individual from the community, the researcher was introduced to him through his grand-daughter. From his profile, it was evident that he had been conferred with an honorary title of a ‘Dato Sri’. Although briefed by the informant who was an acquaintance to both the researcher and the interviewee, during the interview session with him the researcher had by accident addressed him as ‘uncle’, as addressing an older person as ‘uncle’ or auntie’ is polite and a cultural norm. However, given that he was conferred with an honorary title, the researcher was later reprimanded by the informant for not addressing the interviewee as ‘Dato Sri’.

Another important lesson that was learnt through conducting the pilot study was the effect of the medium of language used in the interviews. The ability of the researcher to converse in a bilingual format (English and Chinese) made it possible for her to relate to different interviewees. As discussed in Section 2.7.2, Sarawakian-Chinese who speak different languages are also likely to differ in their values and world views. Therefore, it was important to know which language was most comfortable for the interviewees so it would not lead to uneasy situations and people closing up and feeling inhibited thereafter. In order to gain deeper understanding of the research subject, echoing Mama’s (1987: p. 368) words: ‘I have in retrospect exploited the fact of my own multiplicity by taking up different available positions throughout the course of this research.’

For example, engaging in Mandarin with English-speaking interviewees was to convey a position of inferiority to the interviewee. Chinese-speaking individuals tend to feel inferior towards English-speaking Chinese owing to their lack of capability to converse in the language. Consequently the researcher was careful to avoid the use of English words when interviewing those who spoke only Mandarin or other Chinese dialects. Similarly the researcher would not converse or use any Chinese words with any English-speaking interviewees. Using language
and dialects that were familiar to the interviewees provided an important initial bridge to more expansive conversation on the theme of the interviewees’ perceptions and understandings of their Chinese identity.

It was evident during some of the interviews that several of the older interviewees felt uneasy by the interviewer’s age and educational background, which made an open exchange of information problematic. A strategy that was used to overcome this was to have a third person (instigator/mediator/informant) who was of a similar age to the interviewees in order to alleviate any tension and stimulate conversation and discussion. For example, during an interview, one interviewee showed a tendency to communicate with the third person. Though the researcher’s presence was acknowledged during the interview, the status of the older man or woman was given more attention by the interviewee. Throughout the interviewee sessions, the researcher was aware of the different roles that she played as a researcher. If the interviewees were the same age group or younger, the researcher would play the leading role in asking the questions. However, when interviewees were older, instead of being the main interviewer, the instigator/mediator/informant became the main interviewer.

In most interviews, the person whom the researcher interviewed would subsequently become the ‘instigator’ as he or she introduced their relatives and friends. These instigators would sometimes be mediators when more mature respondents were interviewed. For example, as shown in Figure 4, Nick introduced five of his friends and relatives to the researcher. Subsequently, when the researcher interviewed one of his friends, Nick became a ‘mediator’ during the interview session. Networks of interviewees are further illustrated in Appendix 5.
The role of the ‘third-person’ was to ease any tension or misunderstanding that might occur during interview sessions. It is for the purpose of ‘keeping face’ so as not to embarrass the interviewees should they not understand the questions or find the questions uncomfortable. As ‘face’ is the respect, pride, and dignity of an individual in the Chinese society (Leung and Chan, 2003: p.1575), it is therefore important to ensure the ‘face’ of the interviewees.

5.6.2 The main study

Following reflection upon the pilot study, it was decided that the next stage of the research would incorporate interviewing more people who fitted the sample criteria as listed in Section 5.5.2. The research sample in the pilot study consisted of seven second generation and three third generation Sarawakian-Chinese. In the main study, the sample was extended to include the representation of: all three-generations of Sarawakian-Chinese; individuals educated in the three different language mediums; and religious diversity as described in Section 2.7. Since there is no one version of Chinese identity but the meanings of being Chinese differ from individual to individual, the rationale to incorporate more people is for the purpose of gaining the broadest representation.
Following the changes proposed in the pilot research, the first stage of the main interview session was conducted in the city of Kuching during a period of four months from September 2005 to January 2006. During these four months of interviews, a 9-day trip to China was undertaken in October 2005 with a tour group of Sarawakian-Chinese. Before the trip to China, seventeen interviews were conducted and another eighteen interviews were conducted after the trip to China, six of which were follow-up interviews and twelve were new interviews. In December 2006, another twenty-five interviews were carried out, nineteen of which were follow-up interviews, and another fifteen follow-up interviews were conducted in February 2008.

The purposes of these second visits were: (i) to interview more Sarawakian-Chinese who had agreed to be interviewed but due to time constraint had not been included in the first stage; and (ii) the follow-up interviews were used to limit personal and methodological biases and also to enhance the study’s trustworthiness. In re-interviewing the same respondents, the intention was to ensure that the researcher had not misunderstood or misinterpreted the voices of those interviewed. The follow-up interviews were also beneficial to compare the same sets of data over a period of time, helping to ascertain its consistency.

The follow-up interviews were necessary to prompt respondents to repeat their responses to earlier interview questions. In some cases, it was possible to ascertain the consistency of data because the respondents’ answers remained unchanged even after my second visit and their perspectives remain consistent. However, in other cases, consistencies were harder to achieve. For example, one respondent said, ‘…I didn’t tell you this before because I didn’t know you well the first time but it’s ok now so …’, indicating as more level of trust is gained, more or different information could potentially be uncovered.

There was also another instance where the respondent had confessed that she had not been forthright during the first interview and said that she liked visiting China while in fact she did not. She later confessed that the reason she lied was because her mother was in the next room.
researcher had no knowledge of this at the time), so she felt compelled to give the ‘right’ answer that would please her mother. With the change of environment in the second interview, she was able to express her ‘true’ feelings concerning China, which were contradictory to her first interview. As the researcher gained more trust in the follow-up interviews, it was also possible to ask questions that were more sensitive. The researcher was careful, particularly with the first generation over questions concerning the home village which may be difficult for them to answer due to their experiences of migration. Therefore, to ensure confidence, trust and openness demanded that the researcher made follow-up interviews with the respondents.

The interviewer completed 35 semi-structured interviews with targeted respondents who were all 18 years of age or over and Malaysian citizens. These respondents possessed different levels of education and socio-economic backgrounds, ranging from primary school education to tertiary education. The interviews were conducted in English, Mandarin and other Chinese dialects namely Hokkien and Foochow, to include all the Chinese-speaking groups. The demographic details of the interviewees are presented in Appendix 4. Apart from the use of semi-structured interviews, the findings of this research were also informed by employing participatory and observational techniques, conducted during a nine day trip to China in October 2005.

As discussed in Section 5.5.2, snowball sampling was deemed the most appropriate sampling method for this community and research. However, as snowballing has the propensity to attract like-minded individuals, diversity may be difficult to achieve. To offset this, participants were sourced and encouraged to participate from a variety of networks as detailed in Appendix 5. While snowballing began with the five initial respondents who participated in the interviews during the pilot study, a further 22 separate networks were later introduced. Within networks as is illustrated in Appendix 5, informants may not know others further down the network structure, indicating that diversity can be achieved within snowball samples.
For each interview, the session lasted an average of an hour and was conducted at a location of the participant’s choosing, generally a local cafe, their office or most typically private residences. The interviews were accompanied by another person who was demographically compatible with the interviewees to act as a mediator, as explained in Section 5.6.1. The interviews were also taped with the permission of the respondents and later transcribed, examples of which are included in Appendices 8, 9 and 10.

During the process of consideration of the most suitable methodologies for data collection, focus groups were considered in the initial stages of the research, as focus groups have the potential of yielding a rich source of qualitative data for the social science researcher (Oates, 2000). However, the focus group method faces cultural limitations, specifically in the oriental culture where there is a tendency towards conforming to group norms rather than the pursuit of individualised goals (Yau, 1986). Subsequently, there is the likelihood for the suppression of personal opinions to ‘keep face’, which create data deficiencies and biases. Respect for age is also an important Chinese cultural norm, which in a focus group that is comprised of different ages, would be likely to restrict the opportunities for younger generations to talk openly. Additionally, there is the issue of individuals who are solely Chinese speaking finding English-speaking participants threatening because of their superiority in the English language. The process of forming a non-threatening group amongst different individuals proved to be difficult, as they were not able to meet at the same time and at the same place, leading to the use of focus group to be abandoned.

In keeping with the policy of confidentiality, all the names of the participants have been changed to ensure anonymity and confidentiality because of the sensitivity of issues of ethnicity and nationality. Although this research does not focus upon the political views of interviewees, the issue of identity is implicitly political as a consequence of its connection to the nation state and citizenship. All interviews were conducted on the basis of an informed verbal consent from the
participants. In addition all data were treated in a way that protects the privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, as referred to in Ethics and Research Practice (University of Bedfordshire, 2007).

The demographic profile of the respondents is given in Appendix 4, including their generation, age, gender, religion, education and language. Amongst the 45 participants, two participants were from the first generation of immigrants from mainland China, while 21 participants were second generation inhabitants of Sarawak and 22 participants were from the third generation. The first generation in this context refers to migrants while the second generation refer to those born to the first generation in Sarawak. Thirty-four of the sample identified themselves to be of a Christian faith while eleven were Buddhists. Thirteen participants attended English medium schools from primary to tertiary, levels while eight participants attended Chinese medium schools. Twenty-four participants had attended different language-medium schools from primary to tertiary levels as shown in Appendix 4.

5.6.3 Fieldtrip to China

The second main research method used was participant-observation with a tour group of Sarawakian-Chinese on a 9-day visit to China during October 2005. The rationale of visiting China with a party of tourists was for the purpose of observing the tourism experiences of the Sarawakian-Chinese in the ancestral homeland. The purposes of observing their behaviour were to explore how a (return) visit to the ancestral homeland might cause the participants to re-assess their identities and to help verify the findings from the semi-structured interviews. Therefore everyday conversations, casual discussions and patterns of behaviour of the study group were significant activities which were then recorded in a diary.

The trip to China was booked through The Orient Holidays Sdn Bhd, a local travel agency located in Kuching city, and included nine days of touring Beijing, Tianjin and Chengde. As the
tour arrived in Beijing, it was met by the tour guide from China who led and managed the tour and acted as a cultural broker to the group. It was realised during the initial planning of the trip to China, that it was not possible to visit the researcher’s ancestral home village because of financial and time constraints. Therefore, the (return) visits to China only cover experiences of this package tour and do not include the experience of visiting home village.

The participant-observation approach allowed Sarawakian-Chinese tourists to be observed in situ when experiencing tourism. Therefore, no interviews were conducted during, or post-trip, as it was not appropriate in a situation where the researcher had maintained a covert identity.

The tour group consisted of thirteen individuals and a tour representative from Sarawak, Malaysia and the group itinerary is shown in Appendix 11. Background information on each individual was gathered in informal conversation during ‘free time’ in the evening and during meal breaks. The composition of the tour group included, four males and nine females (including the researcher), of whom six were aged above 60, three were below 30 years old and the rest were aged between 30 and 60. Prior to this visit, five participants had visited other sites in China and only one had visited Beijing, Tianjin and Chengde. Two members had been born in China but had since settled in Sarawak, five participants were second generation diaspora and six were from the third generations. Most of the group members could speak and read Mandarin except for one who was English-educated, who although he could converse in local dialect, was not fluent in Mandarin. Our social conversation was mainly in Mandarin and other local dialects, punctuated with English words.

A fieldwork diary was used to register all activities, conversations and behaviour of the study group. The diary was important in highlighting personal experiences and accounts with members of the tour group and also for recording notes of personal reflexivity, examples are presented in
Appendix 6. According to Emerson et al. (1995: p.4) field notes are: ‘accounts of describing experiences and observations the researcher has made while participating in an intense and involved manner’. Therefore, it is not only the narrative description of the event that is important, but also the documentation of the researcher’s personal experiences, reflections and interpretations during observation (Polit-O’Hara and Beck, 2004). In this study, field notes were taken during or immediately after observations. All notes were organised by date and time and were transcribed into computerised transcripts either on the same day or the day after the fieldwork. Data from the field notes were used in the interpretation of the interviews and the description of the study context.

5.7 Matters concerning validity and reliability

Matters concerning validity and reliability are vital in establishing rigour and credibility in both quantitative and qualitative research. However, as discussed in Section 5.2, quantitative and qualitative forms of research are underpinned by different assumptions and philosophies. Therefore, the rigour of qualitative research must also be judged according to different criteria than is used to judge quantitative research (Popay et al., 1998). For this reason, the following section addresses the issues of validity and reliability of qualitative research.

The notion of validity refers to the extent to which the data accurately reflect the phenomenon under study (Brewer, 2000: p. 46). In other words, validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research. Without validity there is no truth, and without truth there can be no trust in a text's claims to validity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Reliability on the other hand is described as being concerned with the consistency and replicability of the research (Wiersma, 1995: p.9). The term is commonly used in relation to the question of whether the measures that are devised for concepts in the social sciences are consistent. Within an interpretive paradigm as discussed in Section 5.2, the paradigm which is embedded in qualitative approach considers reality to be subjective and multiple, and it is upon
this assumption that Trochim (2000) argues establishing validity is pointless. This paradigm argues that unlike the natural sciences, social life is plural and irregular in nature and is not governed by the laws of nature that are relatively constant (Tribe, 2001).

Instead of reliability and validity, Denzin and Lincoln's (1994) propose the use of trustworthiness as an alternative. The reason they propose this alternative is because they believe that the social world is made up of more than one single absolute reality. Trustworthiness in this sense refers to ‘scientific inquiry that is able to demonstrate truth value, provide the basis for applying it, and allow for external judgments to be made about the consistency of its procedures and the neutrality of its findings or decisions’ (Erlandson, 1993: p. 29). Consequently, in qualitative research, trustworthiness as opposed to validity and reliability is used to establish the credibility of a research. Specifically, trustworthiness is made up of four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

5.7.1 Credibility
Credibility is the examination of whether the research findings represent a ‘credible’ conceptual interpretation derived from the original data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: p.296). Credibility can be established through prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer briefing, negative case analysis and member checking (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Miles and Huberman, 1984; Decrop, 2004), the first three of which were used to establish credibility of the research.

Prolonged engagement consists of examining the research setting over an extended longitudinal period, and this field research was compiled over a three-year period from 2005-2008. The rationale for prolonged engagement is for the purpose of gaining trust with the participants and to better understand the social structure, customs, cultural habits and nuances of the community. Having deeper insights of the culture could potentially reduce misunderstandings and misinterpretations on the part of the researcher and subsequently increase credibility. For
example, during the initial stage of the interview the respondents seemed less inclined to discuss tourism. It seems that within the Chinese culture, ‘tourism’ reflects a lifestyle that is hedonistic and therefore unacceptable. It was not appropriate to initiate conversation that reflects such nature. Subsequently, through several discussions with different informants it was realized that ‘travel’ was a better term to use in initiating conversation rather than ‘tourism’. In addition, follow-up interviews were conducted after the researcher had visited China as discussed in Section 5.6.2, permitting the interviewees to reiterate their answers. These follow-up interviews were only possible because of prolonged engagement in the field.

As for the use of triangulation, this approach was used to establish credibility both for the methods and data collection, as a means to verify and interpret data from different perspectives, as is discussed in Section 5.8.

‘Peer-briefing’ was used as a technique through harnessing the assistance of mediators/instigators/informants to generate interpretive understandings of the data. The processes of double-checking with the mediators/instigators/informants were also an important part of establishing better understandings and avoiding personal biases of interpretations. As the interviews were personally transcribed manually, to ensure a true record of their original source, their credibility was ensued through member checking, whereby the researcher provided the interviewees with an account of the findings for the purpose of seeking confirmation. However, because the interviews were transcribed into English language, not all the interviewees, particularly the Chinese-educated respondents were able to verify the credibility of the transcripts. Therefore, informants were immensely important in assisting to establish the verity of translations.

5.7.2 Transferability

The concept of transferability is concerned with the extent to which the research findings are applicable to other contexts, e.g. in the case to other cultures and ethnic groups. However as Chapter Three has argued, identity is not a fixed entity and diaspora are not a homogenous
group, therefore it would be difficult to apply the same method with other ethnic groups and expect the same outcome (see Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). The data collected are subsequently not absolute but are bound by time, context, culture and value (Marshall and Rossman, 1999), so in order to establish transferability within qualitative research, the researcher must endeavour to provide ‘thick descriptions’ of the research settings. According to Decrop (2004: p.161), the process of writing thick description involves ‘describing the data extensively and compiling them in an orderly way so as to give other researchers the opportunity to appraise the findings and also the extent to which they could be transferred to other settings.’

In order to generate thick descriptive understandings of tourism participation in the Sarawakian-Chinese community, several methods involving semi-structured interviews and participant-observation were used. Data collected from the interviews were used to assist in interpreting and understanding the tourists’ behaviour in China. Whilst data collected from participant observations during the trip to China was similarly incorporated into the semi-structured interviews, to better understand the experiences of the respondents. In addition, the use of photographs was also used to contribute to the ‘thick description’ of the data. By using images to induce memory, the interviewees were able to provide more descriptive narrative of their return journeys to their ancestral homeland.

5.7.3 Dependability

Dependability consists of looking at whether research findings are consistent and reproducible (Decrop, 2004). Positivists assume the world to be unchanging and therefore research may easily be replicated. It also takes on the assumption that the researcher is objective therefore it is possible to replace one researcher with another and still expect the same results if the same method is being used (see Guba and Lincoln, 1994). However, as previously argued in Section 5.2, the interpretive paradigm posits that the social world is unpredictable. Therefore, even if the same method is being employed, different researchers would collate different data because the interviewees may still react differently to the researchers who possess different personal
characteristics e.g. age, cultural background, ethnicity, gender and social class. Consequently, in order to maintain dependability within this study, it is important to consider the correspondence between the data recorded by the researcher and what actually occurred in the setting (Decrop, 2004).

In order to increase dependability in qualitative research, ‘auditing’ as supported by Lincoln and Guba, (1985) is used in this study. The auditing process includes recording all interview schedules, selection of research participations, fieldwork notes, audiotapes, interview transcripts and data analysis decisions (Bryman, 2004). According to Smith (2003), the rationale for leaving an audit trail is so someone else could follow the chain of evidence that has led to the final report. By being transparent in one’s work, it allows the process to be judged by others, not necessarily so that they could replicate the process and reach the same conclusion.

In this study, the provision of an audit trail has been incorporated into the research design from data collection through to data analysis. Section 5.6 has presented the audit trail for the research process including how the participants were selected through a variety of social networks as detailed in Appendix 5; interview setting as provided in Appendix 7; interview transcripts as exemplified in Appendices 8, 9 and 10; and the process of data analysis as described in Section 5.9. A sample of the fieldtrip diary in China is also included in Appendix 6. The researcher’s personal field notes and the informants’ interpretations are discussed in Chapter Six and Seven.

5.7.4 Confirmability

Confirmability pertains to how neutral the findings are. Although a researcher can never be totally neutral, they should assert the strength of qualitative methods by ‘looking for a variety of explanations about the phenomenon being studied, reporting theoretically meaningful variables, and giving others access to factual data in order to assess the way major interpretations
emerged from the empirical material’ (Decrop, 2004: p.160). The rationale for addressing the issue of confirmability is to ensure that the data are reflexive of the informants’ voices and not a product of the researcher’s prejudices and biases. Therefore, in order to ensure the confirmability of a qualitative study, Riley (1996) suggests reviewing the interviews and analyzing procedures, to ensure the adherence to sound research practices.

In addition, Decrop (2004) also suggests that researcher keeps a reflexive journal to record information about the interviews, the analyses and interpretations of the data. A reflexive journal is important for researchers because it makes the researchers becomes conscious of and reflective about the ways in which their questions, methods and their subject position might impact on the knowledge produced in a research project (Langdridge, 2007). Similar to dependability, confirmability may be maintained by keeping an audit trail that records the process and product of the investigation which is vital to maintain confirmability. The methods of keeping an audit trail are demonstrated in Section 5.7.3.

5.8 Triangulation

Triangulation is defined by Stake (2000: p.443) as: ‘the use of multiple perceptions or observations to provide verification or clarify meaning.’ He explains that no observations or interpretations are perfectly repeatable; thus, analyzing the phenomenon from different perspectives automatically serves to clarify meaning. Data from different sources can be used to corroborate, elaborate or illuminate the research in question (Rossman and Wilson, 1994). For that reason, triangulation is used for the purpose of results verification and to overcome bias and validity (Oppermann, 2000; Fielding and Fielding, 1986; Flick, 2002).

Denzin (1996: p.292) suggests four approaches of triangulations namely data triangulation, methodological triangulation, investigator triangulation and theoretical triangulation. Data triangulation is an approach that involves the use of the same approach for different sets of data.
Data may be either primary, such as that generated through interviews or observation, or secondary which is found in textbooks, novels, promotional material, minutes of meetings, newspapers and letters. In addition to written material, pictures and films are also valuable documentary sources. Data triangulation also includes field notes written during and immediately after each interview or observation session. Methodological triangulation pertains to the use of multiple methods to study a single object of interest for example, using participant observation as well as questionnaires. The use of multiple methods has paved the way for more credible and dependable information in this research.

Investigator triangulation is concerned with using different researchers to look into the same body of data. Such triangulation can help reduce personal biases in analysis and interpretation, which typically arise from the investigator’s subjective understanding, gender, ethnicity or culture. This type of triangulation requires outsiders to examine a part of the data and to confirm or invalidate prior interpretations, helping to fulfil the dependability requirement, i.e. under the same circumstances the same interpretation will occur. Finally, theoretical triangulation involves using multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data, emphasising that in the inductive process of building a theory, it is important to bring multiple sources of evidence together to define a construct or a causal relation.

In this research, data and methodological triangulation have been used in relation to interview data, data from participant-observation and also field notes of the researcher’s observation. As indicated in the discussion, the rationale for using these methods is for the purpose of attaining different perspectives and to gain deeper insights into how the respondents make sense of their identities through tourism participation. These different methods of gathering data have allowed for multiple perceptions and observations to be collated in order to ensure for verification of the results.
Concerning investigator triangulation, this research does not employ other researchers to assist in this research, instead using the insights of the informants to cross-check the processes of analysis and interpretation. Since the transcripts were translated into English, informants and the research subjects that were English educated were invited to read the transcripts and to comment on them. For those that are not English educated, informants were also useful to assist in the work of translation and interpretation. Typically, it is a common practice to have a linguistic expert to verify the translation, but in this study it was also not possible due to time and financial constraints to employ linguistic expert(s) to verify all translations. Throughout this research, the use of more than one informant in the field has contributed to the yielding of a broad range of information, thus it is considered as a particular kind of ‘informant triangulation’ (Denzin, 1996).

Finally, theoretical triangulation is demonstrated in the use of the theoretical and conceptual framework of identity formation as illustrated in Figure 1, discussed in Section 1.3. The discourses of diaspora, home and hybridity are reviewed in Chapter Three as being relevant to understanding issues of identity with respect to the construction of Chinese identity in Sarawak.

5.9 Data analysis

In this research, thematic analysis is used to analyse the interpretive ethnographic data, which according to Braun and Clarke (2006: p.79) is: ‘a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Thus, thematic analysis uncovers themes in a text and constructs a web-like network to facilitate the structuring and interpretation of these themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) it is a useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data.

Thematic analysis is a process of bringing order to the data, organising data into themes, sub-themes and sub-sub-themes and looking for relationships within data. The ‘keyness’ of a theme
is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures but rather on whether it captures, i.e. something important in relation to the overall research question (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Themes are identified by bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which often are meaningless when viewed alone (Leininger, 1998). According to Leininger (ibid.), themes that emerge from the data, for example from interviews are pieced together to create a framework for making comparisons and contrasts between the different interviewees. According to Leininger, the coherence of ideas rest with the analyst, who has rigorously studied how different ideas or components fit together in a meaningful way when linked together (ibid.). When gathering sub-themes to obtain a comprehensive view of the information, it is easy to see a pattern emerging.

The reason for using a thematic analysis based upon Braun and Clarke's (2006) process is because it can contribute to the production of interpretively rich data. The main themes captured in this analysis reflected ideas that are relevant to the research aim and objectives presented in the introduction part of the thesis. The following step required all related patterns that emerged from the data to be catalogued into sub-themes, organising clusters of similar issues into sub-themes. For example, the issues of ‘civilization’, ‘history’, ‘culture’ and ‘religion’ are prevalent, emerging from the respondents accounts of their experiences of visiting China. Finally, the sub-sub-themes are selected based on the ideas that emerged from the data to enhance the meaning and significance of the sub-themes, for example how the sub-theme of ‘civilization’ is enhanced by the ideas of being modern or traditional.

The results of the thematic analysis of interpretive ethnographic data of this research are summarized in Figure 5. The significance of travel and tourism amongst the Chinese in Sarawak is analyzed according to these five themes: (a) travel and tourism; (b) motivation for visiting China; (c) experiences of visiting China; (d) home and (e) identity. These themes are selected based on their emergence from the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that are constructed in this study.
5.10 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed and analysed the methodological, theoretical and practical issues that have played a role in shaping the research approach. It began with satisfying the philosophical approach to the research using an interpretive and qualitative approach. Subsequently, this chapter addressed the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions that have guided this research, focussing on the adoption of interpretive ethnography and the associated use of semi-structured interviews and participant-observation as data collection methods. Alongside these methods, the researcher’s reflexivity has also been integrated into the primary data collection methods. The rationale for including researcher’s reflexivity was to take into consideration the researcher’s position in the research, whilst using the researcher’s experience as part of an active interpretation of the study.

This chapter also explored a suitable research sampling technique i.e. snowballing, a method that is suitable as the Chinese community is close-knitted, necessitating the use of quanxi to gain access to members of it. The chapter also presented an exposition of the data collection procedures undertaken in this research. In terms of establishing the credibility of the results, the processes of ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research have been explored and strategies devised for their employment. Finally, the use of thematic analysis in analysing the data generated from the research and how themes that emerged from it have been were organised into main themes, sub-themes and sub-sub-themes were also discussed.
Figure 5: Thematic analysis of interpretive ethnographic data into themes, sub-themes and sub-sub-themes in this study.
CHAPTER SIX:
TOURISM PARTICIPATION AND THE SARAWAKIAN-CHINESE COMMUNITY

This chapter:

- presents the emergent findings relating to understanding participation in tourism;
- explains the comprehensions of tourism held by the respondents;
- examines the barriers to tourism participation; and
- analyses the respondents’ motivations for visiting China.

6.1 Introduction

Following analyses of the transcriptions of the interviews several themes relating to the significance of travel and tourism of the Sarawakian-Chinese community were generated as shown in Figure 5 in Chapter 5. This chapter seeks to subsequently unpack the respondents’ motivations for participating in tourism and visiting China, analysing their travelling experiences to determine parameters for contextualising the discussion of how tourism influences identity. How the Sarawakian-Chinese’ tourism experiences to China influence their ethnic identity will be evaluated in detail in Chapter Seven.

In the course of presenting the narratives of the Sarawakian-Chinese, some of the vernacular and use of the language in Chapters Six and Seven may be potentially offensive to some of the Chinese readers, however the narration of ‘folk terminologies’ and ‘cultural vocabularies’ is believed to be an essential practice in the presentation of an ethnographic text (Atkinson, 1990: p.168). Therefore, it is not the intension of this research to cause any offence but simply to emphasise the voices of the research subjects as is normal academic practice. The reporting of the findings is structured in such a way that they are interspersed with quotes from the
respondents, to reflect the ‘voices’ of the researched. In order to protect the anonymity of the participants all names used in the thesis are pseudonyms. Alongside the ‘voices’ of the researched, the interpretations of the informants and the reflexive notes of the researcher are also included, reflecting the multiple voices that are engaged in this research study.

6.2 Tourism and the Chinese community in Sarawak

Having established a theoretical and conceptual framework for identity formation in Chapters Three and Four, this chapter will explore the significance of travel and tourism in the lives of the Sarawakian-Chinese. It is evident that the Sarawakian-Chinese expressed tourism as a concept that had been popularised by the Western world, conjuring up images of white people sun-bathing on the beach or by the pool side. For that reason, their initial response was to dissociate themselves from the practice of tourism, arguing that the Western lifestyle of ‘working hard and playing hard’ was culturally unfamiliar and unacceptable, as was the intention to spend income and savings on ‘play’ or leisure. In contrast to the Western paradigm of consumer expenditure, which includes tourism, the traditional Chinese ethos is one of ‘working-hard and saving up’. There were strong indications that the Sarawakian-Chinese were resistant to tourism participation because of what it symbolised, associating it with the hedonistic activities of Westerners. The following quotes from the respondents encapsulate these points:

I don’t have time to think about tourism. I work hard everyday so that I can earn enough money to look after my family and to make sure that my children will have a good education and my grandchildren will do well one day. As Chinese people say ‘xian ku hou tian’ (sweetness comes after bitterness). You work hard now, earn and save up now so that you can enjoy life later. The problem with the western people is that they don’t think about their next generation. They spend on themselves first, earning their money and enjoy themselves travelling ... sitting by the beach sun bathing ... what a waste of time and money. They put their needs first. If I have that money, I would save it for the future. [Allan, 65]
I think tourism is a waste of money. Young people, like my children, seem to travel quite a lot. They behave like the ‘ang-mo’ [Western people]. When you visit any hotels here, you normally see many ‘ang mo’ sitting by the pool sunbathing. I thought that is just a waste of time and money. You don’t see Chinese people sitting by the pool, do you? [Nick, 70]

Now that I have retired, I don’t travel as much. Before I retire, I used to travel for business purpose but now I travel only to visit my children. They live in New Zealand. When I’m in New Zealand, we would travel to different places and enjoy some of the scenes. I don’t see the point of travelling for leisure; I’m not ‘ang mo’. [Ben, 57]

During my interview sessions, the interviewees seemed to show a dislike towards the concept of tourism. The image of tourism seemed to be linked with ‘white people’ [sic] even though I have not mentioned ‘white people’ in my conversation. My ‘sin’ of being a part of the Western university might have triggered this reaction. [Field note entry: 29 September 2005]

From the above accounts, it is evident that the Sarawakian-Chinese were defining the concept of tourism in negative terminology, a behaviour that seemed almost pointless. The definitions also emphasise tourism as a mark of differentiation, i.e. it is something the ‘ang mo’ does but not ‘us’ Chinese. Thus an important aspect of how the Sarawakian-Chinese redefine the meaning of tourism incorporates a difference between ‘what is’ and ‘what is not’ the Chinese thing to do. Subsequently, a Chinese person does not sit by the swimming pool and does not waste his/her money in participating in tourism. Therefore, a non-participation in tourism takes on the form of a reinforcement of identity, a token of differentiation between ‘us’ and ‘them’. It argued that the Sarawakian-Chinese use this difference of a perception to justify non-participation in tourism, to enhance their sense of distinctiveness, to distinguish who they are by what they do not do. It is also evident from Allan’s (65) quote that there exists a perception that the Western framework is more short-term and hedonistic than that of the typical Sarawakian-Chinese. Similarly, there is an implicitness of suggestion that Western culture is more individualistic than the collective identity of the Sarawakian-Chinese.
Although Sarawakian-Chinese like Ben (57) may not support the Western concept of tourism, it did not mean that they do not participate in travel and tourism. Some of them may not even explicitly identify their visits to foreign countries as being touristic in nature, nevertheless the descriptions of their activities and experiences proved otherwise. Instead, the Sarawakian-Chinese justified their reasons for participating in tourism by re-defining the concept of tourism, understanding it through their motivations for participating in it.

These motivations for participating in tourism can be categorised into three main themes: (1) to fulfil ‘familial obligations’; (2) to ‘acquire knowledge’; and (3) to ‘relax’. However, the priority given to these themes was not homogenous between the generations. For example, the first and second generations held fulfilling familial obligation as the most important motivation for tourism, whilst the third generation considered relaxation to be more important. The following sections examine these motivations in greater depth.

6.2.1 Familial obligation

As inferred from Section 6.2, the first and second generations regarded tourism negatively, interpreting it as a medium that promotes personal needs and instant gratification above the needs of others and future generations. Therefore, these generations felt it was necessary that they separated themselves from that notion, re-defining tourism as a concept that honours their cultural values, notably emphasising travel for the purpose of visiting relatives. The first and second generations particularly saw themselves as members of a collective group, within which each individual is part of a clan, a village and a family, thereby emphasising the re-union component as a quintessential part of ‘their’ tourism. Subsequently, re-union occurred within the wider dimension of culture, incorporating the physical proximity of the village with the extended family and clan.
Many members of these generations regard relationships as important and hold that their duty as parents or as children is to maintain connections with their next of kin and extended family. The importance attached to the maintenance of these connections is reflected in the following accounts:

...I have been to England several times to see my children. I wouldn’t have thought of visiting England otherwise. As a father, I have a duty towards my daughters. I am responsible for their education. Both of my children are studying in the UK. I save up my money to go and see them. While visiting my children, we would also travel to other tourist areas. I don’t go to their beaches or sit by their swimming pool. Instead we visited the museums and some other historical places to learn about other people’s culture. [Allan, 65]

Family is important. I only travel to see my children. Similarly, when my children have time, they come back from New Zealand to see me. Family is priority. I think you do the same thing too. Chinese people emphasise on family. [Abigail, 80]

Abigail has taken me to be as Chinese as she is and therefore she assumes that being Chinese, we would share similar family values. [Field note entry: 6 September 2005]

The importance of maintaining and sustaining familial relations are an essential element of Chinese culture. Therefore, the first and second generations Sarawakian-Chinese argued that ‘if you are Chinese, therefore you should visit your relatives’, indicating that within Chinese culture there are ‘essences’ that one cannot deny. As can be seen from Allan’s (65) statement, in a postmodern world of ‘hyper-mobility’, the visiting of family does not automatically imply a voyage to China. Families may be dispersed to other countries, notably younger generations who pursue educational opportunities in the West, myself being a prime example. What is also interesting in Allan’s statement is the differentiation in behaviour between himself and Western tourists. As a Sarawakian-Chinese, Allan does not sit on the beach or the swimming pool, choosing instead to educate himself and his daughters in the culture of the ‘other’, typically through visiting museums and other historical places. The inference of this is that hedonism, i.e.
sitting by the pool is not held as ‘culture’, whilst education is. It is also evident that there is a territorial and physical definition of tourism, the beach is for ‘them’ but not for ‘us’.

For the third generation the emphasis on familial ties is not as strong, nor is the obligation to visit relatives in other countries, as Darlene (40) explains:

I do have relatives and friends in other countries but I don’t want to visit them during my holidays. I know my parents would. They are from a generation where relationship is a social obligation. But I don’t want to feel obligated. When I travel, I like to enjoy myself and not feel obligated to visit someone. My parents don’t approve of my thinking. They think I’m rude because Chinese people don’t think like this. They think I’m very western in my thinking! [Darlene, 40]

Similar to Darlene (40), many third generation Sarawakian-Chinese did not emphasise maintaining family connections as important and therefore were less likely than older generations to participate in tourism for the purpose of visiting their relatives. Some of the third generation used the phrase ‘enjoying myself’ as an important element in their motivation for participating in tourism, a characteristic that the first and second generations would regard as being ‘un-Chinese’. They regarded familial obligation and maintaining connections with families as more important than simply participating in tourism to ‘enjoy oneself’. As Darlene (40) stresses the emphasis on enjoying oneself vis-à-vis the obligation of familial networking, is regarded as being very Western by older generations, and is not met with approval.

Being a third generation Sarawakian-Chinese myself, I can empathise with the accounts of the third generation respondents, with their de-emphasis of ‘ethnic reunion’ being congruent to my own sentiment. Prior to some of my holiday trips in the past, I would be given a list of contact names by my parents of any relatives living in the destination I would be visiting. The parental viewpoint was it was not an issue of ‘if you have the time, it would be good to call in’, but rather it was an obligation that I should make contact with the relatives to inform them of my arrival. Such
obligation is usual amongst the Sarawakian-Chinese community, the expectation also extending to the 'host' relatives who should look after their guest(s), with the same level of hospitality being reciprocated should they visit you. This pressure to visit relatives, to stay with them and have your time 'controlled' by them, I have often found to be restrictive and constraining.

For many of the third generation Sarawakian-Chinese, this emphasis on the fulfilling of familial obligation and maintaining family ties were held as an old-fashioned way of thinking. Being able to participate in tourism regularly, in the sense of having freedom to visit different places without familial ties, was a sign of being 'modern'. As Adrian (41) says:

I travel several times a year. Apart from visiting my family in Penang\(^2\) once a year, I also take my family for a holiday as well. I want to expose my children to as many places as possible and let them experience many different cultures as much as possible. I didn't have that opportunity before. I didn't think my parents would approve if I were to travel often except for my job. The old generation is not very open-minded about this and still don't. Their thinking is still backward. [Adrian, 41]

Whilst a differentiation can be made in the perception of tourism between the generations, another factor of difference is education. Just as the first and second generations were held to be 'old-fashioned' by the third generation, the Chinese-educated Sarawakian-Chinese were similarly perceived to be 'old-fashioned' by the English-educated Sarawakian-Chinese. They were classified as 'old-fashioned' because their motivation for participating in tourism was still influenced by traditional values, notably the maintaining of familial networks (guanxi). As discussed in Section 2.7.2, the Chinese-educated Sarawakian-Chinese are more familiar with their Chinese culture than Malay- and English-educated Sarawakian-Chinese, which is reflected in their values and world-views that differ significantly from their Malay- and English-educated counterparts. As Mandy says:

\(^2\) One of the 13 states of Malaysia located on the northwest coast of Peninsular Malaysia.
More and more people of our generation (third generation) are travelling but mostly the English-educated because they have been exposed to a different lifestyle. I don't think Chinese-educated people travel that much and they are old-fashioned. They are also very obedient to their parents. They do what their parents tell them to do. They travel only to visit their uncles and aunties. They are not very adventurous like us. I think once you studied overseas you think differently. People's thinking is still a bit backward because if you travel for just fun then the old folks criticise you for wasting your money. But if you tell them you are going to Australia to visit your relatives then that is acceptable. [Mandy, 27]

I always travel with my mother. We visit our relatives mostly in West Malaysia and sometimes in Singapore. I have never travelled on my own. [Do you want to travel on your own to other countries?] I never thought of doing that. I don't know how my mother would think and I don't think she would approve of it. [Wanda, 27]

Different to the first and second generations, the third generation who participate in tourism are generally English-educated. They speak freely of their travel experiences. They do not focus on VR tourism and they are less likely to talk about visiting relatives overseas. [Field note entry: 10 Aug 05]

In summary, travel for the purpose of family re-union remains a strong obligation and expectation within Sarawakian-Chinese culture. This emphasis, combined with having a connection to one's village of origin and history, marks a demarcation with Western tourism, which is commonly conceptualised as sitting on the beach or by the pool. Embedded in these two distinct patterns of tourism are cultural values, with the Sarawakian-Chinese emphasising collectivity and education, whilst the Western model reflects individualism and hedonism. Thus, the pattern of visitation of the Sarawakian-Chinese is held to be a long-term investment and commitment, in contrast to their perception of the short-term and superficial enjoyment associated with Western tourism. However, the homogeneity of this view is challenged by marked inter-generational differences, as the third generation demonstrate a motivation for tourism that challenges familial dependency and is more closely allied to independence and variety.
6.2.2 Acquiring knowledge

Based on the analysis of data, it is evident that amongst the third generation, the push to travel for family re-union is being replaced by a desire to ‘learn’ and be ‘educated’ about different cultures. Many of them regard tourism as an ‘educational tool’, a means to learn about and experience other cultures, ‘comparing what others have’ and to ‘learn from what we do not have’. Some of the second generation Sarawakian-Chinese were also keen to use tourism to ‘expose’ their children to cultures other than their own.

The typical countries that are visited include Singapore, Australia, United Kingdom, New Zealand, China and Hong Kong, with a common emphasis on developed country status. None of the respondents spoke of visiting ‘less’ developed countries and it was implied that modern destinations were chosen because of the opportunities to gain knowledge or to learn. It is also an opportunity to experience modern technologies, facilities and infrastructures that are unavailable in Sarawak. Other attractions that were cited included visiting museums, zoos, heritage and historical sites, with modern and developed countries being equated with having ‘better’ histories and heritage. The emphasis was very much upon the visitation of modernity, emphasising learning and education as illustrated in the following quotes:

During my holiday, I like to see how people live in their country. I like to see how their public transport works, their way of garbage disposal, their way of greetings, the way they serve their food, etc. I find that fascinating. I like to visit developed countries because you can see how they can become so modern. You can learn more when you visit the developed countries. I won’t go to countries that are less developed (why?) What is there to learn from developing countries? You have nothing to learn from being backward. If you want to learn, you want to visit countries that are better than you own country. [Nancy, 35]
We used to visit other states in Malaysia and I took my children to see various places. It was an opportunity for them to learn about other cultures and experience the culture. There is a saying in Chinese that ‘the more you see the more knowledge you will have. When we travel, we broaden our horizon. Some of their museums are really fascinating. You learn so much about them when you see their museums and how much culture they have. You can understand why their countries can become so modern. [Nick, 70]

As is evident in the passage from Nancy (35), countries that are not perceived as developed are perceived as ‘backward’, from which there is little to be learnt from visiting them. Thus tourism becomes a search for the future, of what Sarawak can become, rather than a search for the ‘authentic’, or what has been ‘lost’, as proposed by MacCannell (1989). Tourism thus becomes a rite of passage not to the past but to the future, not seeking to run away or escape from the modern world, rather to escape to it.

6.2.3 Relaxation

Alongside acquiring knowledge, the third generation Sarawakian-Chinese also recited that their motivation for participating in tourism was ‘to relax’ and ‘to get away from work’. Many of them described ‘doing activities away from their normal environment’ as ‘relaxing’. These activities included shopping, visiting places of interests and understanding other people’s cultures. However, similar to the first and second generations, none of them thought the concept of ‘sun, sea and sand’ to be relaxing, instead considering it as a primarily hedonistic and alien concept.

Their concept of relaxation was to actively engage in activities that were non-work related and yet not passive. Like the first and second generations, the third generation do not include ‘sitting by the pool’ or ‘sun bathing on the beach’ as part of their chosen activities, equating it with the identity of the Western tourists rather than their own. They consider ‘lounging’ as a waste of time and money as illustrated in the following statement:
I like shopping and enjoy tasting different types of good food. These are the only things that I do when I'm on holiday. I find that totally relaxing. It is exactly doing things that are not related to work at all. I never sit by the poolside because sunbathing is not a Chinese thing [sic]. We prefer to be white not black skin [sic]. You sit under the sun, your skin becomes darker [sic]. It's only for western people who do not have enough sunlight in their country. We have plenty of sun and further no Chinese in their right mind would sit out under the sun. Furthermore, I pay all these money to go on holiday, so I must do something. Can you imagine some people pay all that money only to sleep in their hotel and sit by the pool? What a waste! [Sue, 40]

Sue's (40) statement reveals how cultural values influence perceptions of relaxation, value and tourism. Whilst having a sun tan continues to convey a message in Western society of fashion, relaxation and affluence, although the rise in incidences of melanoma challenges these associations, in Chinese culture a dark skin is the representation of peasant culture, of working in the fields. Hence she indicates clearly in her account that not only is sunbathing is not just a Western activity but as a Sarawakian-Chinese she did not want a tan. Sue implied that fair skin was preferable to Chinese people and consequently sunbathing was not an activity of the Sarawakian-Chinese. Thus the activities and fashions of tourism can be signifiers of a differentiation of identity, with the activities pursued by the Sarawakian-Chinese acting as markers of 'what is' and 'what is not' Chinese.

Although the third generation's emphasis on relaxation through tourism is an antithesis for the first and second generations, it is evident that how 'relaxation' is achieved has a greater emphasis on education and activity than the more passive physiological and psychological relaxation of mainstream Western tourism. The place of acting out relaxation is also different, emphasising human-made environments including historical monuments and shopping malls, rather than the physical landscapes of beaches and mountains favoured by Westerners.
6.3 Barriers to tourism participation

Whilst tourism has become increasingly popular amongst the Sarawakian-Chinese community, there remain barriers to participation in travel and tourism. Many of these barriers are cultural rather than economic, sometimes reflecting tensions within the community, notably between the generations. Three main themes are identifiable: cultural constraint; familial obligation; and language, which are discussed in the subsequent sub-sections.

6.3.1 Cultural constraint

Although travel and tourism is not a new phenomenon for many Sarawakian-Chinese, some did not consider these activities as necessary or important. Whilst the first and second generations travelled to visit their relatives, they regarded tourism as ‘a waste of time’ and ‘a waste of money’, as explained in Section 6.2. Culturally, the Sarawakian-Chinese place a heavy emphasis on work, study and family and therefore they re-channel most of their disposable income into these rather than leisure activities. Of particular priority for the community is the use of resources, typically income, to enhance the education and opportunities of one’s children, including those of the extended family. There is therefore an implicit duty to place the needs of the collective, in this case the family, before your own. In the context of tourism, this approach causes tensions between the first and second generations with the third generation, which is more cosmopolitan and does not adhere to traditional values with the same level of conformity. Consequently, any decision to engage in tourism activities by the third generation was often met with disapproval from the first and second generations.

The emphasis placed by the first and second generations on traditional values, meant that as they perceived tourism as being ‘Western’ but perhaps more significantly as ‘hedonistic’, they perceived members of the younger generation that indulged in tourism as being ‘unacceptably selfish’. Thus, the desire to participate in a form of tourism that extends beyond visiting relatives
or returning to one’s village, is frequently met with disapproval. Given that filial piety is considered an integral part of Chinese culture, the emphasis is for the young to honour their parents with time and money, certainly not to be self-indulgent. Thus, participation in tourism, as a form of ‘self-indulgence’, is likely to induce sentiments of guilt. The following two accounts illustrate the contrasting perceptions of taking holidays amongst the Sarawakian-Chinese:

There is a Chinese saying, ‘work hard and enjoy later’. Education is very important. We need to save up for our children’s education. I see my children earn their money and soon they are spending that money on their holiday. I think it’s a waste. I didn’t have that luxury when I was younger. It’s all a very western idea – taking holiday...I am not all against travel but you need to understand priority. [Nick, 70]

My parents do not approve of me taking holiday because they think it is a waste of money. They are very old fashioned – very Chinese-educated. It’s not just my parents but other people too. My friends who are Chinese-educated don’t take holiday either....it’s a very different way of thinking...If you say ‘tourism’ immediately they think ‘waste’ and think of ‘ang mo’ so I don’t think it is Chinese culture to travel for leisure. [Jane, 33]

Both these statements emphasise the uneasiness with Western conceptions of tourism or the ‘holiday’. There is a perception amongst many in the community of holidays being a ‘waste’ of time and money and possibly decadent. Subsequently, tourism becomes something that is not entered into in a sense of freedom of choice as it is for many Westerners but something that has to be fought for and meeting with older generation disapproval, which subsequently restricts the sense of enjoyment associated with it. Jane’s (33) view also re-emphasises how the Sarawakian-Chinese who have been educated in Chinese-speaking schools, still hold more traditional views of the Chinese culture and tourism than their English-educated counterparts. In the context of my personal reflection, when living in the United Kingdom for several years, I took the opportunities to participate in tourism. However, upon returning to Sarawak, I had a responsibility towards my family and the role of being a daughter, a sister, a sister-in-law, an aunty, with the accompanying ‘duties’ and obligations. The care for others subsequently
became more important than the ‘careless’ indulgence of tourism, so whilst tourism is a ‘social stigma’ for the elderly, it also became a ‘stigma’ for me. Therefore, I empathised with the subjects who found their decision to participate in tourism challenging.

6.3.2 Familial obligation

As was indicated in the last section, closely linked to cultural constraints, is familial obligation. A common theme amongst the respondents was that time and money should be concentrated upon fulfilling familial obligation. Respondents who did not live with their parents, often used their school and work holidays to visit them, whether within Sarawak or other countries in which they resided. The emphasis on visiting family is evident in the following accounts from the first and second generations interviewees:

When I was in boarding school, all my term breaks were spent going home. After I finished school, and started working, I would go home every time I had time off work. We didn’t hear of people doing ‘tourism’ before. Family was more important. With the money that I earned, I saved to go home to see my parents. Any extra, I gave them to my parents. That is the Chinese way. Even now, I would expect my children to give me money. [Malcolm, 80]

I used to spend all my holidays just visiting my parents in the village. Even though I could afford the holiday, I just never thought about going away to see other places. I had to see my parents. Parents and family were our priority. It would seem so pu-li (disrespectful) if you don’t visit your parents and choose to go elsewhere. The first time I went away for a holiday was for my honeymoon. Now I see children planning their own holiday without visiting their parents. It was so unthinkable for my generation. [Cynthia, 52]

Both these accounts emphasise the historical linkage and emphasis between the individual and the family. For Malcolm (80), a first generation respondent, the cultural emphasis of education, work and family is evident. Also evident is the expectation that his children would give him
money and support him, it may be presumed, rather than spending it on tourism. Thus geographically and culturally, Malcolm’s life consists of places of home, work and relatives, with no space for a destination that fall outside these criteria. Similarly, for Cynthia (52), approximately 30 years younger than Malcolm, despite having been on holiday for her honeymoon, the concept of tourism for pleasure is a largely alien one to her, something that is participated in by younger people.

This strong emphasis upon familial obligation within Chinese culture, clashes with the desires of many of the third generation Sarawakian-Chinese, who have been exposed to non-family based tourism whilst studying in the West, freed from the social and cultural constraints that inhibit travel when at home. As was indicated in my reflexive account in the last section the duties associated with filial piety upon my return to Sarawak restricted my opportunities to travel. The following statements from third generation respondents illustrate similar experiences:

I travelled quite extensively when I was studying in the UK. I couldn’t come back for holidays because it was too expensive. I wouldn’t tell my parents that I went on holiday because they would be mad. They think I should be studying and not wasting my time and money. After I returned from the UK, I concentrated on working to support my sisters in their education. I never thought about holidays since it would be too selfish if I were to plan for my holiday. I have to think about my family. I didn’t go away for a real holiday until I was married. [Darlene, 40]

My parents don’t quite approve of my holiday lifestyle … so I don’t go away for holidays … so I won’t upset them too much. I have done it in the past but I always coincide it with work so they won’t think that I am taking a holiday on purpose. I don’t think it is a good thing to upset your parents after all they have done quite a lot for me in the past. [Jane, 33]

A significant dimension to Darlene’s (40) account is that she went away on holiday after being married. A theme to emerge was that travelling more widely, i.e. beyond family connections, was
considered more acceptable amongst the first and second generations’ post-marriage. A theme common to both these accounts is that travel is not acceptable without parental approval as a consequence of obligation to one’s parents and the desire not to upset them. Thus, the freedom of choice that pre-married people enjoy in the West of where to go on holiday, as a single or couple, does not extend to the Sarawakian-Chinese framework. Within this framework, the closely associated influences of cultural values and familial ties combine to define a different type of tourism than the prevalent Western model.

6.3.3 Language barrier

Apart from cultural constraints and familial obligations, some Sarawakian-Chinese chose not to travel because they are not confident in communicating in the language of the host countries. For example, some Chinese-educated Sarawakian-Chinese were too afraid to visit English-speaking countries including Australia and New Zealand, because they could not speak English, subsequently visiting only Mandarin-speaking countries. Given the influence of language on the ability to travel, unsurprisingly English-educated respondents travelled to a wider variety of destinations than those who were Chinese-educated, the most visited countries being Australia, New Zealand, the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

A common theme amongst the English-educated respondents, was to differentiate themselves from the Chinese educated ones as being ‘more adventurous’, a characteristic determined by their English language ability. Conversely, the English-speaking Sarawakian-Chinese did not aspire to visit Mandarin-speaking countries such as China, as they are not fluent in the language. This suggests that relative language capacity among individuals from the ‘same’ or ‘nominal’ ethnic group may have a significant influence upon the countries they visit, as exemplified in the following statements from third generation respondents:

I visited Singapore, West Malaysia, Hong Kong and China. I am not that brave to visit other countries like Australia and New Zealand. I never thought of going to other ‘ang-mo’ (Western) countries. I can speak a little bit of English but ‘ang mo’ people
sca me and they speak fast. I don’t understand them at all. I know my friends who went to English-medium school, they seem to travel a lot. I travelled probably once every few years. It’s just scary to go to other countries. [Wanda, 27]

I think I prefer to visit English-speaking countries because I can understand the language. It feels safer and at least I know I can actually enjoy the trip. I don’t have to feel anxious of not being able to understand the language. I can remember the time I went to China and because I didn’t understand Chinese I had to rely on others to interpret everything for me. My experience was unpleasant. I don’t ever want to go to China again. [Darlene, 40]

The accounts emphasise how language ability influences the ‘where’ of travel amongst the Sarawakian-Chinese, just as it does in many other communities. Amongst the third generation, if other cultural barriers to tourism can be overcome, then language ability is likely to have a significant influence on travel patterns. Worthy of note, is how in the account of English-educated Darlene (40), the inability to converse in Mandarin or other Chinese dialects determined that she would never wish to visit China again. This suggests that even if of the same ethnic origin, without the ability to converse in the native language of the ‘homeland’, the desire to visit there is likely to be substantially curtailed.

The lack of desire of Darlene to re-visit China indicates that language ability is not only influential for travel and tourism but also for identity. Negative experiences of the country of one’s roots are likely to make one withdraw from it, leading to a long-term disconnection from its culture. These two accounts suggest a divergence of travel as Wanda (27) restricts her travel to Mandarin speaking countries and Darlene to English speaking ones. They similarly suggest a divergence of identity.

These accounts reinforce my own observation of the influence of education and language ability on travel patterns. Having attended Chinese medium primary school, Malay medium secondary school and English-medium universities, I am aware of the differences amongst these different
groups of Sarawakian-Chinese. Many of my Chinese-speaking friends seldom participated in tourism and the ones that did would only visit Chinese-speaking countries, whilst my English-speaking friends participated more frequently in tourism, typically visiting Australia, New Zealand and United Kingdom.

6.4 The motivations for visiting China

As a physical location in the relationship between travel and identity, China has special significance for the Sarawakian-Chinese identity, given it is the community’s roots and the point of origin of their ancestors. Thus understanding the reasons why members of the community choose to travel to it, is important in the context of understanding the influence of travel on identity. Three key themes of motivation that emerged from the research were: ‘filial piety’, ‘ancestral homeland’, and ‘maintaining familial connection’, which are explored in subsequent sub-sections.

6.4.1 Filial piety

The theme of filial piety is one that transcends most aspects and choices of participation of the Sarawakian-Chinese in tourism. As explained in Section 4.6.1, in a Chinese family the individual is inseparable from a set of hierarchical relationships and obligations, with the will of the individual being subordinated to the will of the family, especially the parents. This sense of duty and gratitude towards one’s parents weaves an iron web of material, emotional and spiritual interdependence between members of the family. Significantly, for the second and third generation, was a sense of honour to be able to visit China with their parents and/or grandparents. This honour was generated from knowing that it was their parents’ wishes to visit China. In the context of filial piety, being able to fulfil the wishes of the parents was a way of ‘giving back’ for sacrifices that they had made for their children, including paying for their education and looking after their grandchildren.
The following accounts illustrate some of the filial aspirations of the third generation Sarawakian-Chinese:

Mom had talked about going to China before and so when I and my husband could afford it, we went together with mom (see Photo 2 in Appendix 12). This is the best way to honour my parent because she looked after my children when I’m at work. Really, this is the best way to repay your parents. Any Chinese would want to take their parents to China. (Have you considered taking them to other countries instead?) I don’t think they would enjoy other countries because China is the ancestral homeland and also they would be able to understand the language and the history. [Amanda, 36]

My parents had supported me in my education. They gave up so much so that I could study in England. My sisters didn’t have that opportunity because I am the only son. So my parents invested their money in me. Now that I am earning money, the least I could do was to take them to China. I felt really honoured as a son that I was able to take them on this trip. I wasn’t planning to go to China myself mainly because I don’t understand Mandarin but I knew my parents would enjoy the trip. I felt it is more of my duty as a son to do so. It’s not my sister’s responsibility to look after my parents. Even if you are English-educated, and I am not very Chinese thinking, at least by taking my parents to China… I am behaving like a Chinese person. [Gerry, 36]

In the case of Gerry, he did not consider China as his own destination of choice because of his inability to converse in Mandarin. He stated that his English-educated background had influenced his worldview, however being of Chinese descent, he was ethnically and culturally inclined to behave like a Chinese person. He felt the act of taking his parents to China had at least redeemed his sense of ‘Chineseness’ because he had fulfilled his duty as a son. This sense of ‘duty’ of behaving in the correct way according to the values of Chinese tradition and culture is apparent in the accounts of both Amanda (36) and Gerry (36). Duty then reinforces the role of travel in identity formation, emphasising the contrast to a more individualistic and hedonistic type of tourism.
Whilst the first and second generations, many had aspired the opportunity to visit China. They hoped that their children and/or grandchildren would be able to afford to pay for the trip and accompany them to China, as it would be an honour, as Colin says:

I’ve always wanted to go to China and I told my son I wanted to go to China. We went two years ago. I’m proud of my son. He has achieved a lot since he finished university. I worked really hard so I could send him overseas to further his studies. Now that he is back and he has a good job, he could afford to pay for our trip to China. [Colin, 70]

Colin’s (70) comments reveal the sense of expectation that is placed upon the second generation. For Colin, his desire was to visit China not any other country, whilst the emphasis on his own sacrifices for his son’s education is also apparent, as is the expectation that his son will pay for the trip to China. Thus a reciprocal relationship between the generations is evident, one of sacrifice and payback over time.

Besides parental expectation of being accompanied to China, the collective identity of Chinese culture is typified by the character of the organisation of travel, with group travel being dominant over individual. Regardless of whether being an English or Chinese-speaking Sarawakian-Chinese, many interviewees had travelled to China with another member of their family or with friends. The desire to travel collectively was also reinforced by a need for safety, as China was commonly perceived as being ‘unsafe’ territory. The fear of being ‘unfairly treated’ or ‘mistreated’ because they were ‘foreigners’ were amongst some of the reasons the Sarawakian-Chinese had not travelled independently to China, as revealed in Amanda’s comments:

I won’t go to China by myself. I would much rather join a tour group (see Photo 1 in Appendix 12) or at least know a friend or a relative in China. I heard so many stories of people being cheated of their money and all sort of bad stuff so I won’t go there on my own. It doesn’t feel safe. Even if they know you are Chinese, they will still rip you off. It doesn’t matter if you are Chinese or not, you are a foreigner. China is not a tourist-friendly place. [Amanda, 36]
Although Amanda’s (36) statement may seem confusing in equating a Chinese person with a ‘foreigner’, it suggests that although one may identify one’s self as Chinese, if you reside outside China you are likely to be labelled as a ‘foreigner’ by those born and living in it (see discussion on Chinese Identities in Section 2.6). In my fieldwork in China, one of the reasons for pursuing a group tour was that it would be against cultural ‘protocol’ if I were to go to China by myself. Further, it would seem ‘unacceptable’ if a single woman were to be part of a tour group on her own without being accompanied by another family member(s). Therefore, it was decided that I should be part of a tour group to China and that I should be accompanied by my mother. As I journeyed to China with the tour group, and subsequently made acquaintances with the members of the group, it was discovered that many of the older members of the group were also accompanied by their children and/or grandchildren. Many of them proudly announced that their children and/or grandchildren had accompanied them on the trip. During one of our stops, a lady approached my mother and myself, saying, ‘You are a good daughter for taking your mother to China’. I nodded politely and for a few seconds I could not help feeling proud of myself until I caught my mother’s eye. I smiled sheepishly because we both understood that my motive for visiting China was mainly an academic endeavour and partly leisure. Nevertheless, I was proud to be in China with my mother!

6.4.2 Ancestral homeland

Important as a reason to visit China is the recognition by the Sarawakian-Chinese that China is their ancestral homeland. However, the degree of association with the ancestral homeland varied between the generations, as did the level of emotional attachment. For the first generation the level of attachment was very high, as they had lived on the land and in their village, it is their ‘roots’. This is exemplified in Colin’s (70) testimony:

I have been to China many times. I have visited my home town in Fujian Division and I have also visited other places in China. I go to China every year. I enjoy it. I
don’t like to go to other countries. If you are born in China, you always want to go back to the village. [Colin, 70]

The statement reveals the priority given to China in the conceptual frameworks of many of the first generation. It stresses the strong bonds that exist between the place of birth and the individual, formulated in the strong desire to visit the village every year in Colin’s case. Subsequently, the village life and China are enmeshed as a physical reality in his identity. This strength of physical connectivity was not as significant amongst the second generation, who often referred to China as a cultural and imaginary capital, with their connections to the ancestral villages verging towards the abstract, as a form of romanticised homeland.

Of significant importance for the second generation, was the importance of maintaining a sense of connection to China to re-familiarise themselves with their Chinese heritage and culture. Many of the respondents felt that by travelling to China they were experiencing the ‘authentic’ Chinese culture as opposed to the one that existed in Sarawak. In order to experience this authenticism, their visit(s) to China incorporated trips to their ancestral village and other tourist landmarks, as recounted by Joyce:

I have visited China three times and I have been to many tourist sites, like the Great Wall of China, the Palaces, etc. We have such incredible history. It makes you realise who you are as a Chinese person. Our Chinese culture starts there. I also have been to my parents’ village once. I just wanted to see what it was like. The village was exactly how some people would describe it – poor. Like what you see on some of the film. Whether you visit the village or the cities, China is where the real Chinese live. [Joyce, 61]

Joyce’s (61) experiences emphasise a sense of pride and connectedness to where she originates from, not literally but culturally, the shared history of achievement. The importance of
image is also stressed, a curiosity to see what her parent’s village is like, a sense of ‘authentic’
China not found outside its territory.

In contrast to the first and second generations, China holds comparatively little association for
the third generation, often being treated as just another tourist destination. Although they toured
famous tourist landmarks, none of the third generation respondents had ever been to their
ancestral village. Unlike older generations, they argued that their motivation to visit their
ancestral homeland was primarily for sight-seeing not for the purpose of re-affirming their
Chinese identity. A typical account of the experiences of a third generation Sarawakan-Chinese
visiting China is as follows:

I have never been to my grandparents’ village. My parents went there few years ago.
I’ve only visited the tourist sites in Beijing and Shanghai. I don’t see the point of
going to the village. It means more to my grandparents and parents but not to me.
They think China is great and Chinese people should go there but I have been to
China, it doesn’t make you any more or less Chinese. Well, now that
I have been to
China, at least I can tell others that I have been to the Great Wall (see Photo 3 in
Appendix 12). [Amanda, 36]

There is then a sense of dissociation with the first and second generations, a suggestion that
whilst visiting the village has meaning for ‘them’, it does not for ‘me’. Nor is there any sense that
visiting China reinforces or grants a Chinese identity. Amanda’s (36) statement suggests a
neutral relationship, one that neither contains pride or detestation. Similarities of experience are
also evident with Western tourism, which emphasises the visitation of tourist sites, in this case
being able to tell others she has visited the Great Wall of China.

It is apparent that the ancestral homeland is more important to the identity of the first and second
generations than the third. Differentiation and separation from the homeland over time means
that for the third generation, who have no physical experience of it as children or adolescents, it
is seen primarily as a place for grandparents or parents. The importance of memory having been in the village as a child, would seem to be central to having a deep-rooted emotional attachment to China. The implication of this, is that the importance of China as a focal point for identity formation will be progressively weakened in subsequent generations.

6.4.3 Maintaining familial connections

Closely allied to notions of filial piety and the ancestral homeland, is the maintenance of family connections as a reason to travel to China. Whilst all three generations recognised China as their ancestral homeland, not all three generations maintained familial connections with their relatives in China. Some of the first generation Sarawakian-Chinese maintained contacts with their relatives in China using telephone communication and letter-writing. However, these contacts remained infrequent and impersonal, subsequently there was a desire to return to China to visit their relatives. The first generation also returned to their village because they longed to see the places where they were born, to be in that physical space. Since this generation was born in China, their connections to China involved shared histories and personal experiences, with their kin and of the village environment. They expressed loyalty to their villages of origin and continue to maintain associated social obligations and emotional ties to family, who still live there. A typical first generation testament of the experience of visiting their village is that of Allan:

I left my village when I was 10. We were landowners before but the government took our land away so we had to leave the country. My sister who is older was left behind. Since we were allowed to return to China, I have been to the village to see her (see Photo 4 in Appendix 12). So my reason for going to China was to see her and to see the village. The village is not the same any more. They have more development and that included my sister’s house. They have good facilities and I think she has a good life. [Allan, 65]
I was born in China. The first time I went to China, I told my relatives that I wanted to see my village. Instead of taking me straight to the village, they took me elsewhere. They were afraid that the dire condition in the village might not be too pleasing for me to see. Even though I had not been to the village for so many years, I knew that the first village they took me to was not my village. It just didn’t feel the same. Although many of my relatives have moved away from the village we continue to come back to the village we grew up in. [Collin, 70]

Allan (65) and Colin (70) like other Sarawakian-Chinese, returned to their ancestral village to reconnect with their relatives but also to reconnect with their past. For three decades, the Sarawakian-Chinese were prohibited from returning to China. Subsequently, the ‘past’ was when they left their village and relatives, and the images of the past remain in their imagination. The first generation’s visit to the village emphasised for them the changes that had taken place since they grew up there, which they viewed positively. Their experiences were not uncommon, as several of the first generation Sarawakian-Chinese had similar experiences of encountering an ‘unexpected’ image of their village upon their return.

This element of change within the village also applies to the wider spatial areas that surround it. For many Sarawakian-Chinese who returned to their village, especially for the first time after decades, there was a heavy reliance on their relatives meeting them and guiding them to the village. Many of these villages were located away from the major cities and therefore the villages were not easily accessible to ‘outsiders’. Even the first generation who was born in China found it difficult to find their way back to their village after many decades of being away.

For the second generation, their relationships with their relatives in China were predominantly mediated through first generation individuals. When the first generation was not present to broker contacts and relationships, they often broke down, even if China as a place remained a significant conceptual entity. Many of the second generation are not that keen to maintain close
connections with their relatives, often finding the relationships straining. Although a few had maintained contacts voluntarily, others complained of the pressures of familial expectation and obligation from the relatives in China and their parents in Sarawak. They were commonly given a list of ‘requests’ from their relatives in China and some were also expected to contribute financially towards their relatives’ education in China. Consequently, some of the second generation Sarawakian-Chinese had not actively pursued connections with their relatives in China, as exemplified in this passage:

...I visited my mom’s village when I went there with my mom. Since she passed away, I have not been keeping regular contact with my relatives in China. Instead I have visited other places in China. The last time we returned to the village, we were given a list of things they wanted, such as ‘branded’ watches, handbags, etc. And we were also made guests of honours in the village because they wanted us to contribute money to build them a proper house. Then there were also their children who needed money for schools, I mean the list just went on and on. I can’t afford to give in to their demands all the time so I think the less we contact them, the better. [Cynthia, 52]

The statement highlights the pivotal role that the first generation has in maintaining the familial linkage to the ancestral village. Cynthia’s account of ‘drifting’ away from her relatives in the village upon her mother’s death was a common one amongst the interviewees. There is also evidently great expectation that members of the Sarawakian-Chinese community who return to their ancestral villages, should make a financial contribution to the ‘welfare’ of their relatives and villages, including ‘branded handbags’ alongside provision for education. This is resented by many in the Sarawakian-Chinese community, with the exception of the first generation. Amongst the respondents, the perception of this expectation was that they are seen as ‘outsiders’, people who emigrated from China to a land where they have found economic prosperity. For the sake of family ‘honour’, it is therefore important to be seen to make a significant financial contribution to village ‘welfare’ during one’s return visit.
In contrast to the first and second generation Sarawakian-Chinese, the third generation respondents in this research had not maintained any contact with their relatives in China, nor did they have any desire to develop an active relationship. The third generation visited China with their parents not for the purpose of reuniting with their relatives in China but to honour their parents and fulfill their parents’ wishes. They had no knowledge of the village location or life, nor of their family relations, and they showed no desire to build relationships. As emergent reason of why they were not familiar with their relatives in China was because these relations were not communicated through narratives in family discussions, for example through story telling of the childhood experiences of village life by the first generation. This trait is reflective of a wider lack of narrative of village life in China experienced by their ancestors.

A significant obstacle to developing relationships between the third generation and relatives in China is a language barrier. This was particularly evident with the English-speaking Sarawakian-Chinese who could not communicate with their Mandarin-speaking relatives in China, as Mei suggests:

I know I have relatives there [China] but I am not bothered about connecting with them. I don’t speak Chinese so I don’t think we can even communicate. I don’t even know where my home village is and I don’t see how it is important for me to know. My parents don’t talk about them. I’m sure connecting with my relatives in China means something emotional to my grandparents. But I don’t feel the same way. [Mei, 22]

Alongside Mei’s reference to language communication difficulties, she also comments that her parents do not talk about the relatives or village in China. There is then a sense of disconnectedness, as if the village and relatives in China belong to the grandparents and parents, but not to her. This lack of oral rendition weakens the continuity of the past with the present. A lack of parental intervention was failing to motivate the maintenance of connections and attachment by the third generation Sarawakian-Chinese to their ancestral homeland.
Subsequently, the culture of China was not being created or sustained by myths, stories and memories within the family.

6.5 Conclusion

If the concept of tourism in the West can be characterised by freedom of choice, relaxation, hedonism and an opportunity for individualism, it is evident that the tourism being participated in by the Sarawakian-Chinese is different. It is embedded in an emphasis on the collective need, filial piety and associated duties and obligations, maintaining family connections, re-union and education. The traditional emphasis is very much on travel to China, the ‘homeland’ to fulfil these requirements, instead of visiting other countries or destinations.

Those who chose to move beyond this framework, to travel to other countries without family or cultural connections were considered less-Chinese. Culturally, it is not acceptable that one should abandon familial obligations to pursue personal interest or to indulge in activities that might be considered as fulfilling personal gratification. To engage in travel for the purpose of leisurely activities implies a behaviour that places individual interests above those of others. Cultural and familial obligations were considered to be more important than personal indulgence and for the first and second generations, the type of tourism that was perceived as Western was considered a waste of money, which would be better spent in support of the wider family, for example on children’s education or supporting the parents.

The first generation in particular is drawn towards visiting the villages where they grew up and relatives that remain in them. As explained in Section 2.5, the opportunity to visit these villages and relatives was denied for three decades under the ‘closed door’ policy. There remains a strong connection to the ‘homeland’ of China for many of the first generation, who still have a strong cultural and language familiarity with their origins.
For both the second and third generations this association with the history, people and culture of their parent’s villages is not as strong, bordering on the non-existent in the case of the third generation. Travel to China for these generations, especially the second, is often undertaken to please their parents out of a sense of duty and repayment to them for sacrifices they have made. There would appear to be little meaningful association or development of relationships between the successive generations and the relatives in their parents’ village.

The weakening of the link of identity between China and the third generation is evidently noticeable. They have little interest in their grandparents’ village and many struggle with the Mandarin language or other Chinese dialects, creating a communication gap between their relatives in China and themselves. Thus their experience becomes one that is based on the sight-seeing of significant sites rather than investing time in building bonds with the extended family. Perhaps surprisingly, the first and second generations fail to nurture this link through the story-telling of village life and experiences, emphasising that the oral tradition is not strong in Sarawakian-Chinese society.

It is apparent that within both the second and third generations, there is a move away from travel that is based on family ties and the Chinese culture. The third generation in particular express desires to visit countries that are perceived to be ‘developed’ and to learn from these experiences. Subsequently, the educational dimension of tourism moves from learning about the Chinese culture to learning about other cultures. However, this trend is much more prevalent within the third generation by those who have been educated through the English-medium rather than the Chinese-medium. Although there is evidence of a diversification of moving away from travel and tourism that is primarily based on satisfying the needs of the parents and visiting China, it would be wrong to assume that there is a move towards a hedonistic model of tourism.
The emphasis amongst the younger generation is very much on ‘education’ through tourism rather than ‘hedonism’.

The implication of this change in desire to travel to more varied places is indicative of a progressive weakening of the ties with China and with the relatives of the extended family who live there. The identity of the Sarawakian-Chinese is not the one which is held by members of the extended family residing in the villages. The lack of desire of the third generation to develop links with their family members in China or to visit the villages of their elders, suggests that in the future tourism will have less significance for the development and continuation of family relationships within the Sarawakian-Chinese community.
CHAPTER SEVEN:

EXPERIENCING CHINA AND INFLUENCE ON IDENTITY

This chapter:

- presents the main emergent findings relating to the experiences of the Sarawakian-Chinese in China;
- examines how visiting to China influences identity; and
- considers how visiting to China influences the concept of ‘home’ and ‘homeland’.

7.1 Introduction

Having analysed the understandings of tourism and reasons for travel in the previous chapter, this one focuses upon the experiences of the Sarawakian-Chinese when travelling in China and how they influence identity. To structure this chapter, the first section addresses the experiences of the Sarawakian-Chinese in their ancestral homeland of China; the second section considers how respondents interpret the concepts of ‘homeland’ and ‘home’, and the final section examines the effects of visits to China upon identity.

7.2 Experiencing China

Significant sub-themes to emerge from the data analysis to aid categorisation of the experiences of the Sarawakian-Chinese include the respondents relationship to: Chinese civilisation; history; culture; and religion.
7.2.1 Chinese civilization

The respondents perceived their relationship to the Chinese 'civilisation' to be significant in their experiences of visiting China, a tendency that was particularly pronounced amongst respondents who visited the major cities such as Beijing, Shenzhen and Shanghai. Many of them expressed their pride in being Chinese because China had now achieved an advanced stage of development. Visual observations were important to this perception, for example the high-rise buildings and the number of expensive cars on the road were all signs of modernity. They interpreted this 'advanced stage of development' as a sign of capability of the Chinese race and related it to their own ethnic identity. Subsequently, China's economic development become a sign of how all the Chinese have progressed, including the Sarawakian-Chinese.

As the Sarawakian-Chinese respondents described their positive experiences of visiting China, they included themselves as being part of the progressive race, often using the term 'we' and 'us'. The following responses illustrate this identification with the Chinese in China:

I have been to Beijing twice. I noticed there were less number of bicycles on the road the second time. Instead I saw many Mercedes Benz cars on the road. There were more high-rise buildings than before (see Photo 5 in Appendix 12). This is truly a sign of development and progression. I am very proud to be Chinese because what you see in China, you know 'we' are progressing fast. The West will have to compete with 'us' now. Even if you were to compare the civilisation five-thousand years ago, you would be fascinated by the way they constructed the palaces. How they learnt to construct such massive building without the use of a single nail and how they learnt to transport the building material from one place to another were [sic] just amazing. This is really the genius of a Chinese mind. Where would the world be without 'us', the Chinese people? [Dina, 69]

China is developing fast. 'We' are becoming one of the economic powers in the region. Even America is afraid of 'us'. (Us?). I mean 'us' - the Chinese people. The dragon is awake. 'We' will show the world what 'we' are made of. 'We' don't bury our heads in the sand anymore. Look at 'us', 'we' have moved to all parts of the
During my trip to China, members of the tour group were very impressed with the economic development of China. Members of the tour group were fascinated by the motorways, overpasses and the number of Mercedes Benz cars on the road. They were also impressed by the number of city towers in the urban areas. It was a while before a member of the tour group noticed that there were not as many bicycles on the road as he thought. The tour guide happily informed us that China is a modern country and most people could afford a better means of transport. I guess I would not be seeing streams of Chinese cyclists heading towards the sunset. [Field note entry: 10 Oct 2007]

The Sarawakian-Chinese construction of Chinese identity was based on their identification with a civilised and progressive ethnic group. To belong to a civilised and progressive group was at the same time an effort to distant themselves from being identified as having an ‘uncivilised’ and ‘backward’ identity. For the Sarawakian-Chinese, to be Chinese was to be modern, to be ‘identified’ with a progressive nation. It was evident that the effect on the respondents of visiting modern cities in China was to integrate their own identity more closely with the Chinese one. The pride in Chinese civilisation was also clear, both in terms of what it had given to the world as exemplified by Dina’s (69) reference to five thousand years ago, and its re-emergence as a major global power. Closely associated with this pride in civilisation, is the theme of history, explored in the next sub-section.

7.2.2 Chinese history

Gaining understanding and being educated in Chinese history was prominent in the experience of the respondents visiting China, particularly amongst the first and second generations. The Chinese-educated Sarawakian-Chinese were evidently more knowledgeable of Chinese history
than their English-educated counterparts. However, it was the over-arching theme of a five thousand year history in which there was an invested pride and association for all the interviewees, rather than specific details of the history.

In their understanding of the Chinese history, it was not the chronological detailing or the contributions of Chinese philosophies to wisdom that were recounted during their interview sessions. It was experiencing and learning about the five thousand year history that had most impact during the visit to China. This impact extended to the respondents identity, knowing who they were, where they came from and how long a history they had, were narratives that construct the sense of Chineseness. Emphasising and glorifying the Chinese history in China also undermined the significance of Chinese history in Sarawak. In comparison to a five thousand year history, two centuries of Chinese history in Sarawak was deemed to be ‘less impressive’ and therefore ‘less significant’ in informing Sarawakian-Chinese identity. The following accounts illustrate the sentiments arising from learning about Chinese history amongst the interviewees:

My trip to China was very educational. I learnt about Chinese history when I was in Chinese schools. But I never knew how much I didn’t known until I visited China. We went to visit several places and the tour guide told us of ‘our’ five thousand year history. I was amazed and very overwhelmed. I didn’t know ‘we’ have so much history. Don’t ask me about what the tour guide said. I can’t remember exactly what he said but just knowing I have a five thousand year history was enough. [Amanda, 36]

I am very proud of being Chinese. We should all be proud of being Chinese because we have a five thousand year of history. Although the Chinese came to Malaysia in the 19th century, so it is really a short history. I like to think we have a five thousand years of history. [Peter, 70]

Subsequently, the ‘five thousand year history’ is significant to linking the Sarawakian-Chinese identity to a longitudinal time dimension that emphasises their origins and ‘roots’. The act of
visiting China both created and reinforced awareness of this history and differentiated it from the history of the Chinese diaspora in Sarawak.

It was observed that during my nine-day inclusive tour to China that the tour guide repeatedly used the phrase ‘five thousand year’ of history in all her narratives to signify the connection of China’s venerable ancient history with the present civilisation. Although the tour guide was incredibly good in her detailed explanations of Chinese history, I was finding it very difficult to remember and to process all the information that I gained. However, upon my return to Sarawak, when asked what I remembered most about my nine-day tour to China, I found myself echoing the same phrase, ‘China has a five-thousand year history’. The knowledge of a ‘five-thousand year history’ was seemingly a phrase ‘indoctrinated’ into the Sarawakian-Chinese. Similar to being identified as belonging to a ‘civilised’ and ‘progressive’ group, the Sarawakian-Chinese perceived having a five-thousand year history as significant to their identity.

7.2.3 Chinese culture and social etiquettes

Of particular interest in the experiences of interviewees when visiting China was the culture and social etiquettes of the Chinese. They remarked on notable differences in attitudes towards filial piety and commented on the ‘authenticity’ of Chinese culture compared to that of the Sarawakian-Chinese. Reflecting upon the Chinese in China, the Sarawakian-Chinese perceived them to be more family-oriented, with a greater emphasis on filial piety than the Sarawakian-Chinese. Of particular note was the willingness of children to have their parents live with them and to look after them in old age, an important sign of filial piety. For Solomon (57), the significant difference between the Chinese in China and the Chinese in Sarawak was this emphasis on filial piety, as recounted in the interpretive ethnographic account:

I have never seen an old folks home [nursing homes] while I was in China. I saw how the younger generations looked after their elderly parents. I saw sons carrying their parents on their back from the top floor to the ground floor every day – once in
the morning and again carried them back up again in the evening when they came back from work. They left their parents on the ground floor so the parents could spend their days with other neighbours. This is the type of devotion I am talking about. Only Chinese culture shows this kind of devotion to their parents. ‘Our’ young generation have lots to learn about this Chinese culture. [Solomon, 57]

The inference of Solomon (57) is that in this aspect Chinese culture is a ‘model of good practice’ from which the Sarawakian-Chinese, especially the younger generation could learn lessons in parental respect and culture.

Alongside filial piety, many of the Sarawakian-Chinese also perceived Chinese cultural practices to be more authentic than the ones in Sarawak, suggested they could be used as a yardstick for things Chinese. Typically, these practices were emphasised and pointed out by the first and second generations to showcase Chinese culture to the third generation. The importance of filial piety to the Sarawakian-Chinese interviewees is explicit in the following responses:

I took my mother to her village many years ago before she passed away. We stayed in the old house when we were there. Our relatives couldn’t afford to put us up in a hotel and even if they could the hotel was located too far from the village. Instead, we stayed with our relatives. Every morning, our relatives brought us a basin of water where we could wash ourselves while they had to wash themselves outside because there was no water pipe in the house. We were given foot massages after our long walk in the village. We were given the best seats and given the best food. We were served special drinks only served during special occasions. The younger generation really served us well and if you couldn’t walk, they carried you. You won’t expect that from ‘our’ young people. [Joyce, 61]

We visited my parents’ village a few years ago. The old house remained the same but they have built extension to accommodate the children’s family. They all live together and the children and grandchildren all live under one roof. They don’t just leave their parents and move elsewhere to live but they stayed together to look after their parents. The children and grandchildren work really hard to support the whole
family and traditionally they give the money that they earned to their parents. It’s really different in my family. I hardly see my children because they all work late then they have friends to go out with in the evening. They start complaining if I expect something from them. They even get upset when I ask them for money. [Benny, 62]

A commonality of sentiment amongst the respondents was that they held Chinese culture in China to be ‘authentic’ vis-à-vis the one in Sarawak which is ‘diluted’. Subsequently, visiting China was held as an opportunity for the respondents to experience authentic Chinese culture.

For example, David recalling his experience in China says:

I visited this small village in Shenzhen and it looked like nothing has changed. Everything was very old fashion and even the people looked like what I imagined them to be. They looked like those pictures in the history book. I saw an elderly man and he was dressed in his old-fashion coolie type of outfit. He looked just like my father. I asked to take a picture with him (see Photo 6 in Appendix 12). Everything that you see in China is just so Chinese. But our Chinese culture in Sarawak is influenced by other cultures like the Malays, so it is not that authentic anymore. It is very diluted kind of Chinese culture. I think the younger generation should go to China to experience Chinese culture in China because it is more authentic. [David, 46]

Although an association between the ‘purity’ of indigenous Chinese culture and that of the Sarawakian-Chinese was problematic, a common denominator of Chinese identity was determined as the use of Mandarin. Those who could speak Mandarin were more able to identify themselves as similar to the Chinese, whilst those who could not converse in Mandarin found their experiences in China to be awkward and unfamiliar. Mandarin was considered to be a unifying factor that brought the Sarawakian-Chinese closer to a Chinese identity. However, just as a common language emphasised a closeness to the indigenous culture, the use of local dialects emphasised separation, as these were not understood by the Sarawakian-Chinese. Local dialects thus became a criterion of division for identifying who were locals and who were ‘foreigners’. As Jane (33) says:
..I think we are quite the same as the Chinese in China because we all speak Mandarin. Chinese people speak Mandarin and English people speak English. It is a bit strange if you cannot speak your own mother tongue. We didn't have any difficulty talking to the Chinese people in China because we could understand each other. It's only when they speak their own dialect that we don't understand what they were saying. When they wanted to say something to each other without 'us' understanding what they were saying, they would revert to their local dialects. [Jane, 33]

According to Jane (33), her perception is that dialects are used by local people when they did not want to be comprehended by outsiders. However, I observed that amongst the tour group of Sarawakian-Chinese, most of the members of the tour group spoke in their own dialects when conversing amongst themselves. The group would also speak in the 'hokkien' dialect when it was a conversation that did not include the Chinese tour guide, reverting to the use of Mandarin when it did. Thus, the use of local dialect(s) was a marker of who was included and who was excluded, while the use of Mandarin was used to unify all Chinese-speaking individuals.

Whilst the use of local dialects was used to distinguish outsiders, the Sarawakian-Chinese also distinguished themselves through the observation of culturally unacceptable social etiquettes. Spitting and begging are common in China and these behaviours were perceived negatively by the group, reflective of a Chinese identity that belonged to China but not to Sarawak. When discussing this behaviour many of the Sarawakian-Chinese began to detach themselves from the Chinese in China. By detaching themselves from this notion of Chineseness, they were not disqualifying themselves from being Chinese but rather identifying themselves to be a different type of Chinese, a 'refined' type of Chinese. As Jane continues:

One of the horrible habits I saw was how Chinese people in China like to spit. They spit everywhere. 'We' are not like that. 'We' don't see many people spit on the road or on the streets in Sarawak. Then there were the beggars. We were told to be careful because these beggars were aggressive. Chinese beggars are different from us. Chinese beggars were aggressive in the way they approach you for money. 'We'
are not aggressive like that. [Who do you mean by ‘we’?] I mean ‘us’ the Sarawakian-Chinese. [What are ‘we’ like?] I think ‘we’ are refined in our Chinese characteristics. [Jane, 33]

Jane’s (33) comments suggest that the ‘what is’ and ‘what is not’ Chinese, is constructed by reference to the cultural norms of Sarawak. This permits an element of ‘pick’ and ‘choose’ of which parts of the cultural practices in China to be associated with. So whilst filial piety, authenticity and the use of Mandarin were closely identified with as being desirable, the use of local dialogues and ‘unacceptable’ social behaviour including spitting and begging were used as demarcators to a more refined Chinese identity, one that belongs to the Sarawakian-Chinese.

7.2.4. Chinese religion

Just as Chinese culture and practices were significant in the images of Sarawakian-Chinese visiting China, experiencing religious practices was also important to the construction of identity. The Sarawakian-Chinese perceived that the religion in China is mainly influenced by Buddhism, and those that were Buddhists found they could relate to it, subsequently being able to participate in religious rituals and practices. In addition to Buddhism, the rituals of ancestor worships are also particularly prominent in the lives of the Chinese community, involving the burning of incense and giving offerings to their ancestors. Those of the group that were Buddhist viewed these practices favourably as these rituals were signs of filial piety towards their ancestors. However, those who were Christians found this experience to be awkward and unfamiliar, as it was against their religious beliefs to offer offerings in this was as an act of worship to the deceased.

Sometimes for the Christian Sarawakian-Chinese, conflict arose between their religion and the expectations of their relatives. Many of the respondents who visited their ancestral village found
that it was ‘mandatory’ that they should show their ‘respect’ to their ancestors. The following illustration depicts their experiences:

I went to my village several years ago. My relatives took me to the village and they took us to the place where all our ancestors were buried. We paid our respect there and we also paid our respect at the shrine built in the house. It is about giving respect and honouring your ancestors. You give them (ancestors) the honour and in return you want to be blessed. The ritual is passed on from one generation to another generation so you don’t just respect the living but you also remember your ancestors in another world. [Duke, 45]

Our relatives took us to the village when we visited them in China. We were shown the family shrine but we didn’t burn any incense because we are Christians. It was uncomfortable because they think you don’t respect the ancestors anymore and you are turning your back on your own. [Dina, 69]

Whilst religious conversion had created the potential for misunderstandings when visiting the villages, religious unfamiliarity was also experienced by those who participated in the inclusive tours to major cities when visits to Chinese temples formed part of the tour itinerary. During visits to the temples, those who were Buddhists would engage in prayer and worship, while non-Buddhists remained outside the temples. Religious faith was subsequently influential to identity, with the interviewees who were Buddhist expressing a closer alliance to Chinese culture than the Christian converts. As one of the tour group members says:

I came along to this trip with my girlfriend because I was curious about China. The tour guide is telling us some interesting history of China but I find it very difficult to understand everything because I can’t understand Mandarin. My girlfriend is doing her best to translate everything into English but still I feel I don’t relate to this aspect of Chinese culture like the rest of the group. The only thing I do find meaningful is our visit to the temples. At least in the temple, my girlfriend doesn’t need to explain everything because I know what to do in the temple. That is the only aspect that I feel slightly more in touch with the Chinese culture.
When I was in China, the tour took us to several temples and some of the group went into the temples to pray, while some of us just stayed outside the temples (see Photo 7 in Appendix 12). I have been on several tours to China and they always take you to these temples. I’m not a Buddhist so I don’t go into these temples. I would prefer not to go at all but going to these temples are part of the tour because it was considered as part of the Chinese culture. I think Buddhist temples are part of the Chinese heritage. Consequently, being a Christian, I feel I can’t relate to that part of the heritage. [Abigail, 80]

Abigail’s (80) sense of detachment suggests that she realised the Chinese traditions of visiting temples was a symbolic representation of a religious identity she no longer shared. As the Christians Sarawakian-Chinese did not see any congruence between their faith and the Chinese heritage, they expressed little interest in visiting religious sites in China. This could be viewed as quite an extreme reaction, as it would not seem unreasonable to expect Western Christians to have an interest in visiting the temples. Thus the desire to be recognised as separate, to belong to a religion that is non-Chinese, could be a significant cause of this behaviour. However, within the time framework of this research, it was not possible to pursue this line of enquiry further.

In place of the Buddhist temples, other sites were given recognition of their religious significance by the Sarawakian-Chinese. For example, a tour to Dr Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hall was treated as sacred by some of the respondents. Although Dr Sun was better known as a Chinese revolutionary and a political leader, it was his Christian faith that appealed to some of the Sarawakian-Chinese. Although the visit did not involve performing any religious rituals, touring the site was a form of religious pilgrimage. Like for the Buddhists who visited the temples, this visit was a type of spiritual experience for the Christians as Amanda pontificates:

While we were touring China, we visited several temples and since I’m a Christian, I found the experience a bit difficult. But I did enjoy my experiencing touring Dr Sun’s Memorial Hall. Instead of seeing everything painted red like the Chinese temples, this place was painted white. It felt different. He was a Christian so I felt spiritually the place was sacred to me. [Amanda, 36]
The differentiation of experience according to religion that Amanda (36) refers to was observed during my visit with the tour group. During our visits to the Temple of Heaven and the Potala temple, those who were Buddhists entered the temple, whilst those who were not stayed outside it. Since I was not a Buddhist, I did not presume that it would be appropriate to enter the temple as a tourist, so instead I remained outside it. Thus, religion acted as an identifier to divide the group, even though we were all from Sarawak and of Chinese descent.

Besides visiting Chinese temples during our heritage tour, we were also taken to the Corner Tower of Beijing City. The Corner Tower housed a sculpture in the form of a mythical beast, having the physical form of a dragon's head, a horse's body, the lions' claws and horns of the unicorn. The tour guide explained that in ancient China, this mystical creature was solely for imperial use. However, in modern China, the beast which is called ‘Pi Xu’ is considered as a *feng shui* guardian, a dispeller of evil spirits and bringer of good luck. In the last few years, the ‘Pi Xu’ has been made accessible to all who could afford to purchase these miniature creatures in a form of a souvenir. The tour guide demonstrated ways in which this mythical beast could be used to invoke good luck in different situations, including in the office to bring prosperity or in the home to bring good luck. After the demonstration, we were encouraged to touch the ‘beast’ if we were to enjoy good health and prosperity. Some of the Sarawakian-Chinese participated in the rituals while others were more reserved.

After the tour and when we all had returned to the coach, it was learnt that this ritual of touching the ‘beast’ brought much confusion amongst some of the tour members. The Buddhists were uncertain whether the ritual was part of their religious practice, while the non-Buddhists were sceptical of the whole ritual, arguing that it was just another ‘superstitious gimmick’ constructed by the Chinese Tourism Board! Since none of the tour group members were familiar with either the ‘beast’ nor the ritual, they were not sure whether it was part of their Chinese religious
heritage. The Sarawakian-Chinese were not sure how they would define such experience or identify with this practice as part of their heritage. I have since learnt that this feng shui practice was only made popular by the Chinese in China in the late 1990s. Even those who had participated in a similar tour to Beijing a few years before were not familiar with this practice. It suggests that new Chinese traditions are continuously invented and constructed to become part of the Chinese heritage.

7.3 The meaning of ‘home’ and ‘homeland’

As was discussed in Section 3.5 of the literature review, an integral component of identity formation is the notion of ‘home’. Subsequently, this section explores the understanding of Sarawakian-Chinese concerning the issue of ‘jia’ or ‘home’. During the interview sessions, many of the Sarawakian-Chinese referred their journey to China as ‘hui’ or ‘return’, even amongst the second and third generations who were not born in China. Commonly, the term ‘hui’ would signify a final journey back to the place of origin to re-settle there. However, in this case the term ‘hui’ was not used to imply an eventual return, being commonly used to signify any journey to China because it was perceived as the ‘homeland’. However, a significant differentiation was made between ‘homeland’ and ‘home’, as exemplified in the statements of Allan and Aaron:

I ‘return’ to China every few years to see my sisters and my relatives then I come back to my home in Kuching. [Do you plan to settle in China?] No. My family is here (Kuching) and I have no home in China. I am only a guest when I ‘return’ to China to see my sisters. My ‘home’ is in Kuching and my homeland is China. They are not the same. [Allan, 65]

I went back to China few years ago but I didn’t go back to the village. I toured the cities. [Why do you say ‘went back’ to China? Where you born there or lived there before?] No. I was born in Kuching and China is not my home. It is my ancestral homeland. I have no intention to live there. I just use the term because everyone used it when they talked about visiting China. My grandparents and my parents use it so I suppose I also use it without wanting to settle there. [Aaron, 38]
Many of the Sarawakian-Chinese referred their ‘home’ as a place where their family lived, whilst as is evidenced by Allan’s (65) statement, he perceived himself to be a ‘guest’ when he was in China. All the Sarawakian-Chinese interviewed during the research, including the first generation who were born in China and later migrated to Sarawak, claimed their home to be in Kuching and not China. Defining criteria of ‘home’ were that it was a place of immediate family and familiarity, thus Sarawak was home, whilst China was held to be a temporary place for visits. The attachment to Sarawak as home was underlined by the respondents’ lack of desire to return to their homeland to retire or be buried there. However, it was also suggested by some of the first generation respondents that it was also not possible to settle in China because they would not be accepted by the Chinese government. Subsequently, it may be that for some of the first generation, any desire to return to China permanently is not recognised or suppressed as a consequence of political realism. The expressed sentiment towards China as the homeland was motivated more by a sense of being part of a ‘great civilization’, and a sense of nationalism towards the Chinese culture, rather than a sense of patriotism towards the Chinese as a political grouping.

A shared sentiment was that it would be difficult to settle in China because of the cultural differences. Following their visits to China to see their extended family, many of the respondents expressed a feeling of being a foreigner or ‘outsider’. These sentiments are illustrated in the following accounts:

Home is definitely here in Kuching. Even though I do like China, I won’t live there. I support China whenever China played any match against other countries including Malaysia. But that doesn’t mean the Chinese government will have me if I want to live there. My home is still here in Kuching because my children and grandchildren are here. Even if it is not fair in this country where Chinese are treated unequally, Malaysia is still my home. [Joyce, 61]
When I was in China, my relatives treated me like their guest. I was treated like a guest of honour. Although they tried to make me feel welcome, it is still not home. I cannot behave the same way like I behave if I were back home. I only visit China for a short time then I go home. [Harry, 55]

It’s crazy to consider China as my home. I was born here (Kuching) and I live here [Kuching]. I have nothing there (China). My family is here. I don’t know anyone in China, not even my relatives. I have a job here. I won’t have a job there. [Darlene, 40]

Common to these quotes is that even though China may be regarded as the ancestral homeland, it is an unfamiliar environment despite family connections. Even for Joyce (61), who would support China in sporting events against Malaysia, ‘home’ is in Kuching. None of the Sarawakian-Chinese sustained any longing for return to their ancestral homeland, nor had any of them maintained a house in China, they possessed no symbolic physical entity in their ancestral homeland. The visits to China had often challenged perceptions of their identity and their experiences were instrumental in destabilising their sense of belonging in China. Subsequently, although the Chinese may be discriminated against in Malaysia, it is still regarded as home. The familiarity of the immediate environment, including family, employment, cultural norms and behaviour, would appear to be important in distinguishing ‘home’ from ‘homeland’.

7.4 Degrees of ‘Chineseness’

Whilst a differentiation was made between ‘home’ and ‘homeland’, several of the Sarawakian-Chinese expressed an ‘essentialist’ view of their ethnicity, that is as being inherent. This trend was notable amongst the first and second generations who understood that being born to Chinese parents meant that they have Chinese blood in their veins, which was a definitive indicator of Chinese identity. Therefore being Chinese is an essential, unalterable matter, rooted
in biological forces and the genes, as discussed in the analysis of ‘essentialism’ in Section 3.2.1. Subsequently, if one is born Chinese, it is not possible to become ‘un-Chinese’.

Those who adopted this essentialist view identified their ethnic identity as being similar to the Chinese one with visits to China re-enforcing their sense of Chineseness. They judged and measured ‘Chineseness’ based on a set of criteria. The following statements illustrate the views of some of the Sarawakian-Chinese who perceived their Chinese identity to be inherent:

I am Chinese because my ancestors came from China. I was born in China. I have an Identity Card from the Malaysian government stating that I am Chinese because I come from Chinese descent. Similarly when I go to China, I look no different from the Chinese in China. [Colin, 70]

I am not born in China but my parents are Chinese so that is enough to make me Chinese. I read, write and speak Mandarin. I celebrate all Chinese festivals and observe all Chinese customs. If you are Chinese, you celebrate Chinese New Year. Even the Chinese in China also celebrate Chinese New Year. If you are not Chinese, you won’t be celebrating this Chinese festival. [Dina, 69]

I am Chinese because my ancestors were from China and my parents are Chinese. I may not speak Mandarin but I am still Chinese. It’s in the blood. I may not necessarily celebrate all the Chinese festivals or observe all culture and customs that do not mean I am not Chinese. It’s not something that you need to prove. It is something that you are. When I’m in China, I look like the Chinese person. When I was overseas, I was identified as Chinese because of my colour skin and my slanting eyes. [Lily, 27]

Common to all these statements is ‘lineage’, i.e. I am Chinese because my ancestors or parents are Chinese. Physical features were also a determinant of identity, setting them apart from other ethnic groups, the key phenotypical characteristic of differentiation for others being ‘yellow skin colour’ and ‘slanting eyes’ according to Lily (27). Thus perceptions by others can reinforce one’s
own identity, a point also emphasised by Colin, who observes that his Chinese identity is
categorised on his identity card used by the Malaysian government.

Divergence of what is expected in terms of cultural involvement to be Chinese is also evident.
For the first generation Dina (69), celebrating Chinese festivals, customs and speaking Mandarin
were all essential for identity. Yet for the third generation Lily (27) the converse was evident, as
she did not speak Mandarin, nor did she participate in all the Chinese festivals, but she still
identified herself as being Chinese. The theme of cultural norms to define Chineseness was
referred to by several respondents who felt it important that these practices were maintained to
distinguish themselves and to preserve their ethnic identity. They argued that participation in
cultural events, customs and rituals serves as a demarcation between those who are Chinese
and those who are not. As cultural norms were perceived to be important markers of identity,
they are subsequently used by the Sarawakian-Chinese to assess one’s degree of
‘Chineseness’.

The Sarawakian-Chinese commonly objectified the Chinese culture and broke it down into
discrete practices, customs and traditions. These elements carry symbolic weighting of
Chineseness, e.g. celebrating cultural festivals, using chopsticks and eating certain foods, the
participation in which can be evaluated to assess their degree of association with the Chinese
identity. Whilst the first and second generations argued that their sense of Chinese identity was
similar to the Chinese in China, they also stated that their sense of ‘Chineseness’ was not as
‘authentic’. As David (46) comments:

Being Chinese means my parents are Chinese and my ancestors came from China. I attended
Chinese-medium schools so I am fluent in my Mandarin. Some of my colleagues are English-educated so they could only write their Chinese names but can’t really read Chinese characters. Compared to them, I am more Chinese. But if you were to go to China, you would realise that the Chinese there are far more Chinese than we are. I don’t think we are very Chinese compare to them because
our Chinese culture is influenced by the local cultures and we are also more westernised. [David, 46]

Alongside illustrating the comparison of indigenous Chinese culture with the one of Sarawak, the quote also makes a difference in the gradation of how Chinese a Sarawakian-Chinese is. David (46) argues that having completed his schooling and education in the Chinese language, he is more Chinese than his English-educated counterparts, signified by his mastery of Mandarin. As was indicated by Jane in Section 7.2.3, the ability to converse fluently in Mandarin is essential to make connections with Chinese people when visiting China.

The emphasis on the authenticity of cultural practices in China, meant that China was perceived as a place where one could be educated or re-affirm one’s own proximity to the Chinese identity. In the view of the first generation it was a place where younger Sarawakian-Chinese should travel to, to help understand their identity as suggested by Allan:

I think Chinese people should go to China often. At least we would be able to learn something about being Chinese. How to behave like a ‘proper’ Chinese person. It makes you feel proud to be a Chinese person. The young people will learn how to give proper respect to their elders. They would know what to do during Chinese festivals and know the do’s and don’ts of the Chinese rituals if they visit China more often. You become more and more Chinese, and more Chinese-minded too. [Allan, 65]

There is an apparent comparison and divergence in the strength of Chinese identity based on criteria of age, education and Mandarin language ability. Allan (65) implies that younger Sarawakian-Chinese do not know the do’s and don’ts of being a Chinese person, implicitly suggesting he is more Chinese than them. Similarly the third generation David (46) suggests he is ‘more Chinese’ than his English-educated counterparts but at the same time is less Chinese than the peoples of the homeland. However, Lily (27) who is English-educated states that despite not speaking Mandarin or observing cultural practices, she is
Chinese because it is in her blood. Nevertheless, a sense of being less-Chinese than Mandarin speaking Sarawakian-Chinese was expressed by some respondents. For example, the following statement from Jane, illustrates her sense of not ‘measuring’ up to those who had the ability to speak Mandarin:

I don’t know if I am a right candidate for your interview. I am not a typical Chinese person. (Why do you think you are not a typical Chinese?) When I’m at work, all my colleagues speak Mandarin. Even my clients prefer to deal with my colleagues because they speak only Mandarin. It makes me feel ‘less’ like a Chinese person. When I visited China, I felt like an alien because I did not understand the language at all. I can speak my own Chinese dialect, I can understand it, therefore I am Chinese somewhat. But if I can speak Mandarin, then that ability would definitely make me ‘more’ Chinese. [Jane, 33]

During the observed tour to China, there was one member of the group who could not speak nor understand Mandarin. Throughout the tour, the Chinese tour guide spoke in Mandarin and this gentleman required the constant assistance of his girlfriend for English translation. In one of our conversations, he confessed that he found the whole experience of visiting China challenging because of the language barrier. He found it problematic to relate to the Chinese culture and heritage, did not comprehend Chinese history, and visits to China only made him more aware of how different he felt as a Sarawakian-Chinese.

Reflecting on my experiences, there were times when I felt inadequate as a Chinese person. For example, during meal times when bowls and pairs of chopsticks were set on the tables, I knew my ‘handling technique’ was a bit ‘rusty’. Knowing of my difficulties, my mother asked if I wanted to use other ‘easier cutleries’, making me feel embarrassed and that to swap would betray my sense of Chineseness. I also feared the waitress might bring out cutleries suitable for children. My mother tried to salvage the situation by finding an excuse, telling the group sitting round the table that because I had lived in England I had forgotten the Chinese way! I was perplexed by
the excuse, as on the one hand it made me feel guilty because I had not kept my Chinese ways, but on the other hand I was relieved because now I was allowed to drop all my rice on the table!

This experience of not being Chinese enough was not restricted to myself, with several of the tour group stating they felt ‘less’ Chinese because they could not measure up to the perceived cultural standards of a Chinese person. However, instead of justifying their ‘Chineseness’ to be inferior, there were attempts to re-define their sense of ‘Chineseness’. They re-identified themselves to be Chinese that were ‘westernised’, ‘refined’ and in some cases ‘superior’. This sense of superiority was often created by the honour they were accorded when visiting China and because they were treated as ‘superior’ to the local Chinese. In addition, they perceived the ability to speak English also gave them an extra ‘point’ to be a different type of Chinese. Consequently, they perceived that being Chinese with a Western influence resulted in a ‘refined’ identity as illustrated in the following quotes:

I am familiar with Chinese culture and when I visited China, I found them to be rough and loud. We are not like that. We are influenced by western thinking and western education. Although we are not ‘ang mo’, our Chineseness is more refined than the Chinese in China. [Amanda, 36]

The last time I visited the village with my husband, the whole village came out to meet us. There was the display of fire-crackers. We felt really important. Then we were ushered in to a banquet hall where a feast was prepared for our arrival. Everyone followed us everywhere. And there was also presentations of the villagers various needs. We felt obligated to donate financially to the village. We felt like the rich and famous. [Joyce, 61]

When we were visiting our relatives in China, we were treated like the emperor. We were given massages and we were served well. That is not the kind of service you get back home [in Sarawak]. If you want to feel like an emperor, go to China. A chef was hired to cook us a meal. They treat all overseas Chinese like VIP! [Harry, 55]
Implicit to these quotes is the sense of being an outsider but also being Chinese. Differentiation was made upon cultural practices as reported in Section 7.2.3 with reference to begging and spitting as indicators of separation. Subsequently, whilst the essentialism of lineage and genetic continuity ensure a sense of being Chinese, the meaning of this identity is being re-constructed in the community, a theme explored in the concluding section of the chapter.

7.5 Conclusion

The Sarawakian-Chinese perceive China as being significant in constructing their ethnic identity. It is also apparent that there is a commonality of being 'Chinese', however the degree this association varies by characteristics of age, education and language. Within this association there is an element of 'pick and mix', which was observed during the field visit to China, as members of the group evaluated various aspects of Chinese culture. For example, the respondents were proud of 'their' five thousand year history, being part of a 'progressive race', the level of economic development in modern China and its re-emergence as a global power. However, a dissociation was made from aspects of unacceptable social behaviour, such as spitting in the street and aggressive begging.

The observation of cultural practices in China and the respect of filial piety resulted in an expression of these practices being more ‘authentic’ than those in Sarawak. Admiration was often expressed of these rituals and especially the strict observation of filial piety, which was held in high-esteem by the first and second generations respondents. Yet, despite the pride in association with mainland China and the respect of the authenticity of its culture, China was seen as the ‘homeland’ rather than ‘home’.

There were a number of reasons of why the Sarawakian-Chinese viewed Sarawak as their ‘home’ and China as their ‘homeland’. These included that Sarawak was the place of immediate
kin, and for the second and third generations, it was the place where they had lived their formative years and undertaken schooling. It was also a place where the respondents felt at ease with their hybridised identity, including the first generation, despite discrimination against their Chinese ethnicity. Travelling to China reinforced this sentiment, as they were frequently treated as ‘guests’ or ‘outsiders’, and although visiting the ancestral villages often conferred a high status upon them it also emphasised their difference.

It is evident that the Sarawakian-Chinese also vary in their degree of sense of being Chinese. Critical to this degree of association are the influences of age, education, language and religion. For the first generation who were born in China and spent their early years in the villages before emigration, their sense of being Chinese was the strongest. They placed great emphasis on aspects of filial piety and expressed a view that the younger generations of Sarawakian-Chinese should visit China to be educated in the authenticity of cultural practices and rituals.

Within the second and third generations, Western influences were more evident in diluting their sense of Chineseness. Notably, conversion to Christianity from Buddhism, education in the English medium and a reliance upon English as the main language of communication rather than Mandarin, were instrumental to diluting their sense of being Chinese. The common theme to these influences is that they enhance a sense of unfamiliarity with Chinese rituals. For example, the Christian Sarawakian-Chinese in the tour group did not know what to do at the Buddhist temples, whilst third generation non-Mandarin speakers sense that they are less Chinese, and are excluded from wider communication.

In summary, the experiences of the Sarawakian-Chinese in China highlighted their similarities and differences to the Chinese. It is evident that although all Sarawakian-Chinese feel themselves to be at least Chinese in an essentialist context, their degree of ‘Chineseness’ is
affected by Sarawak culture, especially religion and education. They also make a clear
distinction between Sarawak as ‘home’ and China as the ‘homeland’.
CHAPTER EIGHT:

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter:

- discusses the findings of the research and their relationship with the research background;

- analyses the contribution of this research to the field of tourism, theory of identity and methodological practice; and

- assesses the limitations of the study which affect its scope and applicability.

8.1 Discussions of research findings

Chapters Six and Seven are formulated from a collection of interpretive ethnographic accounts of the Sarawakian-Chinese who participated in travel and tourism, focusing on their travel experiences to China. This research study examined the influence of participation in tourism amongst the Sarawakian-Chinese community upon their ethnic Chinese identity. The following sections explore how the themes that emerged from the findings relate to the conceptualisations of identity previously reviewed in Chapter Three. In addition, the outcomes of the investigation are also evaluated with reference to studies in the field of tourism which were analysed in Chapter Four. These sections are organised according to the main research themes of the study, which are: (i) the significance of travel and tourism; (ii) barriers to tourism participation; (iii) the significance of travel to the ancestral homeland; (iv) China and Chinese identity; (v) homeland and home; and (vi) degrees of ‘Chineseness’. 
8.2 The significance of travel and tourism

Travel and tourism are significant to the Sarawakian-Chinese community as a means to fulfil their familial obligations and also to acquire knowledge of other cultures. These two themes of familial obligation and knowledge acquisition as motivators for tourism represent a significant divergence from mainstream Western tourism. For example, the Sarawakian-Chinese refuse to participate in hedonistic activities such as sun-bathing on the beach or by the pool side, that are commonly associated with Western tourism. Subsequently, a cultural differentiation is made between the behaviour of the Sarawakian-Chinese and Western tourists.

The judgement of behaviours according to ‘what are’ and ‘what are not’ the correct and suitable Chinese things to do, assumes that there are objective elements that can be used to distinguish the Sarawakian-Chinese from the Western tourists. As Barth (1969: p.13) remarks: ‘membership of an ethnic group therefore implies having a basic identity and the claim to judge and be judged by standards relevant to that reality.’ In this context, the Sarawakian-Chinese emphasise and claim their identity by not sunbathing, judging the activity as hedonistic and therefore unacceptable to be associated with. Thus a collective identity is being formulated and reinforced through comparison with the ‘other’, a prerequisite for the definition of both individual and collective identity.

However, the objective judgement of what is the typical behaviour of a Western tourist is debatable, as many typologies of tourist activity and behaviour exist. Critically for identity formation, it is a perception constructed by the Sarawakian-Chinese to distinguish themselves as different, i.e. identities evolve through comparison and are in a constant state of being reconstructed and reshaped. As Ngan (2007) argues, any individual is bound to create something through relational positioning between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’.
The Sarawakian-Chinese pre-dominantly perceive Western tourism as being individualistic in character and focusing on short-term gratification, which contrasts with the Sarawakian-Chinese emphasis on the importance of the collective and long-term investment in future generations. Thus, the character of the type of travel and tourism participated in by the Sarawakian-Chinese emphasises the collective, through the fulfilment of familial obligation and the interaction of different generations whilst travelling, especially to the homeland of China. Long term investment in the future is emphasised by the desire of the first generation to maintain familial links between the second and third generations of Sarawakian-Chinese and their relatives in China. It also reinforced through the acquisition of knowledge of the history and culture of China and experiencing the environments of modern and developed destinations. Although, the ‘collective’ and ‘long-term’ may be characteristic to Sarawakian-Chinese tourism, there are significant differences of emphasis between the generations. Notably, the first and second generations emphasise fulfilment of familial obligations, whilst the third generations focus on acquiring of knowledge.

These findings of the cultural differentiation of what tourism is, challenge that the meaning and concept of tourism can be taken as universal, based upon ‘conventional’ Western definitions. In dealing with cross-cultural research, Schutte (1999: p.37) states:

‘Culture has a profound impact on how individuals perceive who they are, what they are allowed to do and what their role is as a member of society. These perceptions are often so thoroughly internalised that they are difficult to express explicitly but they are revealed through behaviour such as consumption’.

Significantly, several authors (Hitchcock 1994; Schutte and Ciarlante, 1998) have emphasised the importance of re-evaluating the differences in Western and non-Western consumer behaviour, including the consumption of tourism. They argue that cultural values may appear to be universal however they do differ in terms of importance and priority (see Ap, 2004). Therefore, for the Sarawakian-Chinese to participate in tourism may seem like a Western idea,
but it does not necessarily mean they have embraced Western values. The two key motivations of ‘fulfilling familial obligation’ and ‘knowledge acquisition’ are explored more fully in the subsequent sub-sections.

8.2.1 Tourism as means for fulfilling familial obligation

It is evident that the first and second generations of Sarawakian-Chinese regard fulfilling familial obligation as important, and therefore travel for the purpose of visiting relatives in order to maintain familial ties, is a quintessential part of their tourism activities. The first and second generations, particularly the Chinese-educated, regard the maintaining and sustaining of familial relations as essential element of Chinese culture, including maintaining their connections with their extended family living in China. Subsequently, what can be termed VR tourism forms an important factor in their motivation for participating in tourism. Their emphasis on VR tourism suggests that their concept of tourism is consistent with other societies whose cultural values are influenced by the principles of Confucianism.

Even the third generation Sarawakian-Chinese, who do not generally emphasise the importance of familial connection with their relatives in China, visit China as an act of filial piety in response to their parents and grandparents’ wishes to visit their ancestral homeland. Central to this act of filial piety is the concept of obligation and reciprocation in human relationships as illustrated in the following quote from the Confucian scholar Tu (1998: p.128):

The Confucian belief that moral self-cultivation begins with the recognition that biological bondage provides an authentic opportunity for personal realization. The duty and consciousness generated by the acknowledgement that we are beneficiaries of our parents and older siblings and that our well-being is inseparable from theirs is not one-way obedience. Rather it is a response to a debt that one can never repay and awareness that the willingness to assume responsibility for paying that debt is morally exhilarating.
A community that is influenced by Confucianism will see themselves as members of a collective group, within which each individual is part of a clan, a village and a family. Subsequently, the individual joins into the collective fulfilment of the needs of the others, an integral part of the Chinese culture. It is for this reason, that the first generation who most strongly adhere to Confucian values, perceive familial connections as emphasising duty and obligation. This obligation ties them to their relatives in China and also to deceased ancestors, through the practice of ancestor worship, a practice that forms a critical element in the relationship between the Sarawakian-Chinese and China. As Park and Cho (1995) argue, for the Chinese community, Confucian values are the dominant values that influence Chinese social relations including the relationships that tie them to the land of their ancestors.

Although the second generation Sarawakian-Chinese continue to attach strong importance to the maintaining of familial connections, emphasis is placed on the immediate family. Their kinship connections seldom extend to their relatives in China, except when the first generation mediates the relationship with the relatives there. Many of the second generation Sarawakian-Chinese avoid maintaining contacts with their relatives in China because they are expected to contribute financially to the development of their home village and also support the children’s education. For the second generation, the concept of family seldom includes the relatives of the first generation in China as they are unfamiliar, thus they are not obligated to them.

Given the lack of familiarity with their relatives in China and an unwillingness to accept traditional familial responsibilities for them, the second generation has developed a different travel pattern to the first generation when visiting China, travelling to tourist sites besides spending time with relatives in the village. Thus the focus of their visit is not weighted solely to investing all their time strengthening familial relationships but also includes the development of education and knowledge. This process of the dilution of the family bonds between the Sarawakian-Chinese and mainland Chinese accelerates within the third generation. In all the cases of interviews with the third generation, none had attempted to maintain contacts with their relatives in China. The practices of maintaining and sustaining family ties is considered to be out-of-date for the third
generation, suggesting that the principles of Confucianism that have traditionally structured behaviour in Chinese society, are less dominant in influencing their motivations for participating in tourism than for the first or second generations.

Moscardo et al., (2000) in their studies of VR tourism, made a separation between VR as an activity and VR as the prime travel motivation, a distinction that is evident between the generations of Sarawakian-Chinese. For the first generation, VR is the prime motivation for travelling to China, whilst for the second generation, it is treated as an activity, something to be done to fulfil their obligations to their parents. For the third generation, VR has become largely insignificant as a motivatory force or activity in the context of travel to China. The degree to which VR is conceptualised as an ‘activity’ or as the ‘prime travel motivation’, indicates the degrees of attachment the Sarawakian-Chinese have with their extended family in the ancestral homeland. The emphasis placed on VR as a motivation to visit China by the first generation, suggests that they display greater physical and emotional attachments to their relatives in their ancestral homeland than do successive generations.

8.2.2 Tourism as means for acquiring knowledge

Whilst the third generation is less interested in VR tourism, they are however keen on travelling for the purposes of education and gaining knowledge. Their visits to countries such as Singapore, Australia, United Kingdom, New Zealand, China and Hong Kong are motivated by the perception of these countries being developed, from where there is much to gain in terms of learning and education. Their motivation for participating in tourism is to seek out the modern, not the authentic. This represents a significant difference to the Western tourism market, a part of which actively seeks out the ‘authentic’ and ‘primitive’, or is motivated to travel by ‘nostalgia’, as was discussed in Section 4.5. Contrary to MacCannell’s (1989) concept of seeking out authenticity in the pre-modern society through tourism, the Sarawakian-Chinese take holidays to ‘escape’ to the modern world. MacCannell’s (ibid.) concept is drawn from observing the
behaviours of the Western tourists, indicating that the motivations for participating in tourism are not the same between Westerners and non-Westerners. Whilst value placed on learning and education may be universal, cultural differences may exist in terms of their importance and priority in tourism motivations.

The finding of the use of travel and tourism by the Sarawak-Chinese as a means to acquire knowledge, is concurrent with the research of Jang et al (2003) and Zhang and Lam (1999) as detailed in Section 4.6.1, which also found that Chinese citizens often value travel and tourism as a means to broaden their minds. A survey published by the Far Eastern Review (1994), also found that both Koreans and Taiwanese chose destinations based primarily on their educational value, rather than for fun and enjoyment. These studies emphasise that communities in the East consider learning and education as important factors in their tourism motivations and experiences.

For the third generation, participating in tourism for the purpose of fulfilling familial obligations is considered ‘old-fashioned’, having been replaced by the motivation to be educated by visiting destinations that are held to be modern. The emphasis on acquiring knowledge rather than fulfilling familial connections suggests that the third generation is de-emphasising the traditional values of Chinese culture. However, significant cultural barriers remain to the ability to participate in tourism that is largely self-determined, as is explored in the next section.

### 8.3 Barriers to tourism participation

Whilst tourism to other countries is becoming increasingly popular amongst the younger Sarawakian-Chinese, there remain significant cultural barriers to tourism participation. Previous sections have demonstrated that the first and second generations place a heavy emphasis on the structure and duty to the family, study and work, therefore re-channelling most of their
disposable income into these, rather than leisure activities. Consequently, it is deemed unacceptable for individuals to pursue activities that are seemingly self-gratifying, including tourism. The Sarawakian-Chinese’ attitudes towards tourism are consistent with the work of Schutte and Ciarlante (1998) in which they found that Asians (Asians according to their text refer to communities of Oriental origin), generally have a negative attitude towards leisure, whilst Westerners have a positive attitude towards it.

Belonging to a collective community, the fulfilling of familial obligation is deemed as a priority, which combined with the emphasis on filial piety means that it is important for the younger generation to respect the wishes of their elders, subsequently avoiding participating in activities that may cause tension between them. Although the third generation desires to challenge the importance of traditional cultural values, they continue to place emphasis on the family, study and work. Although the weighting of importance placed on each of these may not be the same as for previous generations, the third generation still possesses a collective mentality, subsequently placing the needs of the group above the individual. Therefore, the negative values associated with tourism, make it a difficult activity to participate in without causing inter-generational strife and arguments.

Alongside the cultural constraints and familial obligations, the inability and lack of confidence in conversing in the language of the host countries inhibited some Sarawakian-Chinese from participating in tourism. If able to, the English-educated Sarawakian-Chinese generally prefer to visit English-speaking countries avoiding Chinese-speaking ones, whilst for the Chinese-educated Sarawakian-Chinese, the situation is one of vice-versa. For the English-educated Sarawakian-Chinese who had visited China, their inability to converse in Mandarin had a significant negative impact upon their experiences, often marginalising them and making them reliant upon a translator. It is apparent that within the Sarawakian-Chinese community the medium of education and language abilities are influential in determining travel behaviour. Whilst
the ability to be able to communicate in the destination is important, the evidence of this research also shows that language is influential to identity, which also determines where one desires to travel to.

8.4 The significance of travel to the ancestral homeland

As China is the ancestral homeland for the Sarawakian-Chinese, it has significance in the identity formation of the Sarawakian-Chinese as a focal point for the origins of their culture. For members of the first generation who were born there and who have since settled in Sarawak, their connections to China are embedded in their psyche. These connections extend beyond the physical to encompass the emotional, alongside a historical attachment, to their place of birth. Maintaining familial connections with their relatives in China and visiting them are also ways in which the first generation expresses their loyalty to their villages of origin. The strong link to the homeland expressed by the first generation is similar to many other diasporic communities, where the purpose of visiting the ancestral homeland is for the maintenance of social and cultural ties (see Duval, 2004; Nguyen and King, 1998; Stephenson, 2002; Baldassar, 2001; Ali, 2008), and to seek out their roots (Bruner, 1996; Lowe, 1991; Stephenson, 2002).

The first generation have lived in China and expressed a sense of nostalgia in their travel experience to visit their ancestral village, what Stern (1992) refers to as ‘personal nostalgia’, a concept explained in Section 4.3.2. This sentimental yearning for the past that one has actually experienced, is emphasised for the first generation through ties of history and genealogy, their close connection of ‘place’. The memories developed from firsthand experience in the homeland and obligations derived from social relationships are important to the psyche of the first generation. Consequently, they show more emotional attachment to China and possess a greater sense of obligation towards it, than successive generations. This observation concurs with other studies that show that those who left their place of birth to settle in other parts of the
world, are likely to return to visit after establishing themselves in other countries (Nguyen and King, 1998; Feng and Page, 2000; Lew and Wong, 2004; Kang and Page, 2000).

By contrast, the second generation’s connection with their ancestral homeland veered towards the less tangible, based primarily upon cultural and historical links with China rather than emotional and personal ties. Although not as emotionally attached to their ancestral homeland as the first generation, many of the second generation regard China as the cradle of Chinese culture and as a central to the Chinese identity. Their visits to China tend to focus on the ancestral villages and cultural and historical landmarks, the purpose of visiting the latter to re-familiarise themselves with their Chinese heritage and culture. Many of them also perceive China as possessing the ‘authentic’ Chinese culture as opposed to the one that exists in Sarawak. Their perception that the Chinese culture is authentic has resonance to Wang’s (1991) concept of ‘constructive authenticity’, in which experiences of the authentic are socially constructed and not objectively measurable. In other words, authenticity is no longer ‘a property inherent in an object, forever fixed in time’ (Bruner, 1994: p.408). Through visiting China they share this ‘authenticity’, at the same time ‘re-authenticating’ their own sense of ‘Chineseness’. A similar pattern has also been observed amongst the Greek-American community, in which Greece is perceived to possess the authentic Greek culture, resulting in many of the community travelling there to experience it (Christou, 2003).

The relevance of a ‘quest for authenticity’ for diasporc communities, is not the same as the one suggested by MacCannell (1989) in explaining the demand for tourism. To briefly re-iterate the main point of the discussion in Section 4.2.1, MacCannell’s (1989) view is of the ‘modern’ tourist seeking authenticity in a primitive or less modern world, which is situated in a geographical and cultural ‘periphery’. However, in the tourism experiences of the Sarawakian-Chinese, China is perceived to be the centre of all things Chinese, embodying the authenticity of the Chinese culture. Subsequently, contrary to MacCannell’s (1989) view of tourism as a search for
‘authenticity’ in a primitive society situated in the periphery region, the Sarawakian-Chinese find their ‘authenticity’ in the centre. In the context of a search for cultural authenticity, the Sarawakian-Chinese tourists journey from the ‘periphery’ of Sarawak to the ‘centre’, embodied in the homeland of China.

This perception that China is the cradle of all things Chinese reflects an essentialist ideology that is still resonant in the mindset of the diasporic Chinese, even though their identity is continually going through transformation (Tan, 2001). This concept of an ‘authentic’ Chinese identity existing in China is founded upon the construction of an ‘imaginary community’, within which a sense of belonging is sustained by fantasy and imagination. It is ‘imagined’ because there is a lack of awareness of changes influencing the culture within China, or they are not understood and taken into account. Thus, there is a view that the community remains the same as when the diaspora left it, whereas in reality it may have changed considerably. It is ‘imagined’ as a consequence of spatial separation, meaning the Sarawakian-Chinese do not have the physical and sensory experience of China unless they travel there. It is during these return visits to the homeland that the diaspora is able to reconstruct their images of the home culture (Wang, 1999; Meethan, 2004). In the case of the Sarawakian-Chinese, this reconstruction tended to reinforce the sense of the cultural authenticity of China.

The thesis that it is possible to return to the ancestral homeland to experience authentic Chinese culture is contestable, because as Bruner (1994) argues, culture is always dynamic and therefore there is no fixed point to where one can return. Subsequently, in order to maintain a sense of familiarity, some diasporic communities construct an idealised version of the past. In the context of the general Chinese diaspora, Glick (1980) observed that they often returned to their ancestral homeland to get married; sent their children to China for education; and stayed in touch with their relatives to be informed about the economic and political climate.
This behaviour reinforces the observation of searching for ‘authenticity’ and the ‘ideal’ within China in its guise as the ‘homeland’. This pattern of behaviour is not unique to the Chinese diaspora, as in other cultures such as the Vietnamese in Australia (see Nguyen and King, 2002) and the Pakistani diaspora in the United Kingdom (see Ali, 2008), diaspora also travel to their ancestral homeland seeking potential spouses of the same ethnicity, attempting to ensure that the traditional culture could at least be preserved within the family in the host country. However, in the case of the Sarawakian-Chinese, apart from the maintaining of family connections by the first generation, none of the Sarawakian-Chinese sought spouses in China and neither did they send their children to China to be educated. It may be that the Sarawakian-Chinese are an atypical diaspora, conversely their behaviour maybe reflective of changes in the behaviour of the Chinese diaspora more generally, thirty years after the reporting of Glick’s (1980) research.

The dynamic nature of culture is illustrated by the shifting perceptions and changes in values across the generations encompassed in this study. For example, the strength of cultural and emotional ties to the homeland amongst the third generation are substantially less strong than for previous generations. They do not consider that visits to their ancestral villages enhanced any familiarity of identity with family, people or place, conversely reinforcing their separation from it, whilst China was often perceived as little more than another tourist destination.

The greater interest and motivation to visit China displayed by the first and second generations reflects a closer association with its heritage, alongside the emphasis on the maintenance of familial ties. This pattern concurs with the research conducted by Poria et al (2006), who concluded that the greater the tourists’ perceptions of a site being part of their own heritage, the greater the motivations to visit it. Whilst it is difficult to identify a single causal factor as being significant for the weakening of these links in subsequent generations, a decline in emotional attachment may be linked to the lack of ‘story-telling’ and the transmission of an oral history of experiences of China by the first generation. By not discussing the past, the first generation does not create images of China for later generations. Through not engaging in discussion and
story-telling, the first generation is sub-liminally conveying to subsequent generations that China belongs to a past, which is irrelevant to them now. Subsequently, the legacy of homeland is not sustained through the generations, nor does the image of China evoke feelings of home, belongingness and self-identification.

The importance of the oral tradition is emphasised by Stephenson (2002), who argues that narratives such as myths, stories and memories within the family are critical for association, as they enable individuals to construct an image of the ancestral homeland. This may subsequently be transmitted to later generations, creating a sense of continuation between the past and the present. Without these narratives, later generations are less likely to sustain any emotional attachment to their ancestral homeland, as is demonstrated by the Sarawakian-Chinese.

This absence of an oral tradition within the Sarawakian-Chinese community contrasts markedly with other cultures. Both in the Caribbean community (see Stephenson, 2002) and the Pakistanis’ diaspora (see Ali, 2008) residing in the United Kingdom, it was observed that the oral tradition plays a crucial role in maintaining familial and emotional connections between successive generations and the homeland. The most likely explanation of this seemingly specific trait of the Sarawakian-Chinese community, is that the first generation were prohibited from returning to China for over thirty years during the closed door policy, thus the recounting of times spent in China may have been too painful in the knowledge that a return was not possible.

Whilst age and experience are important variables in influencing the attachment to the homeland, the ability to converse in the native language was also found to be important. For the English-educated Sarawakian-Chinese, a significant reason for their lack of interest in China is their inability to converse in Mandarin, combined with the world-view that was developed during schooling. This finding is consistent with the observations of the Chinese diaspora, where the medium of education was found to have a significant impact upon their values and world-views,
including their relations to the ancestral homeland (see Chin, 1981; Ong, 1999; Parmer, 2001; Tan, 1990). For the Sarawakian-Chinese, the negative experiences of China as a consequence of an inability to converse in Mandarin, have subsequently led to a sense of disconnection from China and its culture. These experiences of alienation because of a language barrier are synonymous to other huaren who were raised in other countries and could not speak Mandarin (see Louie, 2004; Maruyama and Stronza, 2006).

Whilst the inability to understand Mandarin affects the English-educated Sarawakian-Chinese’s attachment to their ancestral homeland, their Chinese-educated counterparts display much more appreciation of their ancestral homeland. Being able to understand Mandarin allowed the Chinese-educated Sarawakian-Chinese access to the Chinese history and culture that is beyond the experiences of members of the English-educated community. It thus permits an enriched experience of visiting China and a closer identification with the Chinese culture. The significance of language to identity formation and being indicative of authenticity is emphasised by Wu (1995: p.118), who argues that: ‘for some cultural groups, language is symbolic of their ethnic identity and values and it demarcates the boundaries of group membership’. This is evidently the case with the Sarawakian-Chinese community, with those who do not speak the Chinese language feeling they do not belong to the same group as those who are Chinese-educated and vice versa.

8.5 China and Chinese identity

Having visited major cities such as Beijing, Shenzhen and Shanghai in China, the Sarawakian-Chinese expressed their sense of pride in being Chinese. They perceived the developments in these cities as signifying the achievements of the Chinese race. It is evident that their visits to China are significant in informing their identity, an identity in which they see themselves as part of a progressive race. Whilst associating themselves with China’s recent development, they also identify themselves as belonging to a race with a five-thousand year history. Whilst they ‘exalt’
having an association to a long history, they are also critical of the length of their own history in Sarawak, suggesting that they prefer a five-thousand year history to emphasise their origins and ‘roots’. Parker (1995) also found in his research with the Chinese diaspora, that the association with the long history of China supported a strong sense of ethnic identity for the huaqiao and huaren.

However, the Sarawakian-Chinese also identify some social etiquettes such as spitting and begging as distinctively Chinese and not Sarawakian-Chinese. When discussing this behaviour, many of the Sarawakian-Chinese detach themselves from the Chinese in China, classifying their identity as ‘refined’ in comparison. These contradictory perceptions of association suggest that the Sarawakian-Chinese define their ethnic identity by ‘picking and mixing’ what are perceived as acceptable aspects of being Chinese and what are not.

The influence of religion also plays a vital role in ‘connecting’ the Sarawakian-Chinese to their ancestral homeland. It is evident that the Sarawakian-Chinese who embrace Buddhism are more ‘connected’ to China because they are able to relate and participate in rituals and practices in temples when visiting there. In addition to Buddhism, the rituals of ancestor worships are also particularly prominent in the lives of the Chinese community, involving the burning of incense and giving offerings to their ancestors. These rituals are particularly important when visiting one’s ancestral village, where it is one’s duty to pay respect to the ancestors.

Whilst the practices of Buddhism and ancestor worship are meaningful to some of the Sarawakian-Chinese, the same practices are awkward for those who have embraced Christianity. Besides being unfamiliar with these practices, it is also ‘un-Christianly’ to offer any forms of worship to the deceased. Subsequently, aspects of ancestor worship as a part of the visits of the Christian Sarawakian-Chinese to their ancestral villages are unfamiliar and awkward.
This sense of unfamiliarity and alienation from practices in the villages, supports McDaniel and Burnett's (1990) observation that religion is a fundamental element of culture, and that conversion to another religion may result in cultural loss and alienation.

8.6 ‘Homeland’ and ‘home’

The Sarawakian-Chinese commonly use the term ‘hui’ to refer to their visits to China. ‘Hui’ means return in Mandarin and it was initially thought by the first generation of diaspora that China was a place of eventual return. However, in all cases, the term ‘hui’ was not used to imply an eventual return but visits to their ancestral homeland. As was explained in Section 6.4.2, the Sarawakian-Chinese refer to China as their ‘ancestral homeland’ whilst Sarawak is their ‘home’, the ancestral homeland being the place from where their ancestors originated, whilst, home is the place of familiar environment and where their immediate family live.

The Sarawakian-Chinese expression of ‘home’ as a familiar environment with immediate family, has resonance with Walter’s (2008) analysis of its meaning described in Section 3.5.2, in which home embodies aspects of roof, relationships and roots. An apparent difference in the case of the Sarawakian-Chinese is that ‘relationships’ and ‘roots’ extend to China. However, the strengths of these relationships are becoming progressively weaker with successive generations. For the second and third generations especially, home is recognised to be a place where the family live, as opposed to where extended family members reside in China. Subsequently, these key relationships with their immediate family give them a sense of being rooted in Sarawak, their identity being rooted in a localised context and within familiar practices. Thus, the cultural norms of behaviour are created in Sarawak and not in China, with many Sarawakian-Chinese now being unfamiliar with the culture in China, indicating that Chinese cultural in Sarawakan is increasingly becoming localised.
Unlike other diaspora, e.g. the Pakistani (Safran, 1991; Wang, 1999; Ali, 2008), there is no desire amongst the first generation to return to live in China, there is no ‘myth of return’. Whilst uncertain why this is the case, when considered with the lack of story-telling by the first generation, it could be that the political practices and closed door policy of the Chinese state for three decades past 1949 has led to a schism of disassociation. All the first generation respondents have taken Malaysian citizenship and therefore would not be accepted as Chinese citizen in China. Besides the presence of the extended family, expressions of sentiment towards China as the homeland would appear to be motivated more by a sense of being part of a ‘great civilization’ and a sense of nationalism with the Chinese culture, rather than a sense of patriotism towards China as a state or political grouping.

A further dissimilarity to other diaspora, e.g. Pakistanis, Indians, Caribbean, is that none of the Sarawakian-Chinese own property in China. The lack of possession of a physical entity such as land or a house suggests that the Sarawakian-Chinese do not sustain any longing for an eventual return to their ancestral homeland. Within other diaspora, house ownership in the homeland has proved to be a significant factor in encouraging the eventual return of migrants, or at least maintaining a myth of return. The diaspora in this context would not view him/herself as a visitor or tourist but as someone who is a resident and part of the community. It has symbolic significance and means that one is never a guest in one’s own house or country of origin. For example, Ali (2008) found that amongst the Pakistani diaspora in the United Kingdom a house in Pakistan lent a sense of ‘home-making’ therefore the first generation Pakistanis in Britain would have a ‘home’ to return to, making them the ‘hosts’ and not ‘guests’ in their own country (see Ali, 2008).

The ownership of homes in a ‘second space’ may result in identity issues, as Williams and Hall (2002) have observed, where owners of second-homes may find it difficult to establish their identity in relation to the locations of their homes. However, for the Sarawakian-Chinese this is
not the case, as they do not possess homes in China. Thus the ownership of purely a residence in Sarawak vis-à-vis China, reinforces the concept of Sarawak as the place of ‘home’. This lessens the propensity for an internal struggle over the possibility of an ‘eventual return’ to China. The possession of a house in Kuching and not owning one in China, combined with the presence of family members living in Kuching, are important characteristics of identity for the Sarawakian-Chinese.

The experience of being treated as a ‘guest’ was endemic within the group visiting to China. The effect upon the psyche of the Sarawakian-Chinese was to destabilise their sense of belonging to China. Ironically, the ‘warmth’ of reception was a causal factor of this sentiment. When visiting their ancestral village, they were often shielded from the domain of everyday life of the local communities, typically being given ‘places of honour’, e.g. being seated in places of honour at the banqueting hall. They were separated as ‘outsiders’ and placed in an esteemed position by the village community, instead of being treated as ‘one of their own’. As Sarawakian-Chinese, they are simultaneously cast as ‘guests’ and ‘outsiders’, thereby exposing them to new experiences of ‘otherness’ in relation to their homeland. Within these roles they enjoy the privilege of being served and treated as ‘superior’. The treatment received by the Sarawakian-Chinese is similar to Lew and Wong’s (2004) observations of the receptions given to other huaren who had returned to their ancestral homeland. However, the experiences of being treated as a ‘guest’ and ‘outsider’ are not common to all diaspora. For example, in Stephenson’s (2002) study of the Caribbean community, he observed how the diaspora fitted in to the everyday life and rhythms of their community upon their return visits.

The sense of separation from the homeland displayed by the Sarawakian-Chinese is contrary to the thesis proposed by several authors (Safran, 1991; Wang, 1999; Chow, 1993), that diaspora who live outside their ancestral homeland would eventually return there and it would be recognised as ‘home’. Within this argument the diasporic community was thought to regard
themselves as sojourners and not as permanent settlers, identifying more with their place of origin and less with their country of residence. These authors suggest that because of their sense of displacement and rootlessness, many diasporic communities sustain a sense of longing for return to their homeland, partially fulfilled through regular return visits. This hypothesis is supported by observation of the Pakistani diasporic community in the United Kingdom (Ali, 2008) and the Italian community in Australia (Baldassar, 2001). However, it is contradicted across all the generations of Sarawakian-Chinese, with none of them holding their ancestral homeland as a place of eventual return. Neither do they demonstrate a sense of rootlessness and dislocation in their daily experiences of life in Sarawak.

This perception of the Sarawakian-Chinese challenges assumptions that have been made about the desire of diaspora to relocate to their homeland. For example, Safran (1991) claimed that the diaspora’s sense of roots would always remain with the place of birth, a place where their identity could anchor and (re)locate. Subsequently, the diasporic community would not find home in places other than their homeland. For Braziel and Mannur (2003: p.6), the preoccupation with searching for the ‘authentic’ home, only serves in: ‘bastardizing the states of displacement and dislocation, rendering them inauthentic places of residence.’ The variability of association with the homeland, the progressive diluting of it by successive generations, also challenges Cohen’s (1997) assertion that the ‘old country’ would always have some claim on migrants loyalty and emotion.

The constructs of the Sarawakian-Chinese also challenge the conceptualisation of home as more than one place as proposed by Williams and McIntyre (2001) and Rouse (1991). As the Sarawakian-Chinese have relocated their new ‘home’ in Sarawak, they have simultaneously abandoned the concept of holding China as ‘home’. Nor do the Sarawakian-Chinese display any tendency for simultaneously having a ‘home’ of the present and a ‘home’ of the past, which are two different physical places, as suggested by Baldassar (2001).
In summary, the constructs that are displayed by the Sarawakian-Chinese in relation to 'home' and 'homeland' are contrary to expectations based upon research with other diaspora. The Sarawakian-Chinese are physically and emotionally ‘stuck’ to their new land, being a ‘settled’ community who are not existing in Said’s (1994) concept of a ‘median state’ or ‘third space’, between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ lands. It is also evident that this strength of association to Sarawak is growing in successive generations. This finding lends support to Brah’s (1996) thesis that as home is a sensory experience, generations born outside the country of origin of their parents, would subsequently possess a different concept of home.

8.7 The degrees of ‘Chineseness’

Whilst China is significant reference point for formulating the Sarawakian-Chinese identity, degrees of association with the ‘Chinese’ identity vary within the community. It is evident that some of the Sarawakian-Chinese perceive their ethnic Chinese identity as similar to the Chinese in China. An ‘essentialist’ view of their ethnicity as being inherent, was held by several respondents, especially amongst the first and second generations, who understand that being born to Chinese parents means that they have Chinese blood in their veins. Therefore being Chinese is an essential and unalterable matter, rooted in biological forces and the genes, thus if one is born Chinese it is not possible to become ‘un-Chinese’. Despite their own ‘localised’ and multiply constructed Sarawakian Chinese identity, the Sarawakian-Chinese community continued to perceive the Chinese identity as fixed. They assumed that their ethnic Chinese identity has an essence which is universal and timeless, within which there existed fixed cultural and historical traits which are pre-determined by primordial forces. The impact of visiting China upon their ethnic identity was often to reinforce their sense of biological and physiological similarities to the Chinese, subsequently reinforcing their sense of ‘Chineseness’.
Several of the Sarawakian-Chinese feel that participation in cultural rituals and practices are also important for distinguishing themselves as ethnically Chinese and preserving their ethnic identity. Celebrating Chinese festivals, customs and speaking Mandarin not only reaffirm Chinese ethnic identity but also act as a demarcation between those who are ethnically Chinese and those who are not. The respondents’ perceptions of Chinese ethnic identity being based upon: essentialism; participation in ritual and cultural practices; and being able to converse fluently in Mandarin, is consistent with Tu’s (1991b) findings that as long as an individual could claim an ancestor originating from China, speak the Chinese language and practice some form of Chinese culture, they remain Chinese. According to Wang (1991) these elements represent the core characteristics of notions of contemporary ‘Chineseness’, which give identity in a mobile world.

As was referred to in the context of essentialism, physical features are an important determinant of identity, setting the Chinese apart from other ethnic cultures. Stereotypical characteristics of ‘slanting eyes’ and ‘yellow skin’ were identified as markers of separation, features which Barth (1969) suggests may be used for boundary maintenance, controlling an individual’s entry into and exit out of the group. These phenotypical features are seen as permanent badges or emblems of identity by the Sarawakian-Chinese, i.e. as unchangeable markers of Chinese ethnicity. Although it is argued that the observing of cultural practices and use of languages are defining characters of identity, there are those Sarawakian-Chinese who identify themselves as ethnically Chinese but do not speak Mandarin or rarely participate in Chinese festivals. In this case, their identity is formed by perceptions of the reactions of outsiders or non-Chinese, who label them as ethnically Chinese because of their physical appearance.

Whilst there is a sentiment of sharing a Chinese identity within the Sarawakian-Chinese community, there are varying degrees of gradation of one’s ‘Chineseness’ that are distinguishable. The Sarawakian-Chinese commonly ‘objectified’ the Chinese culture, breaking it down into discrete practices, customs and traditions. All of these elements carry a symbolic
weighting of Chineseness, e.g. celebrating cultural festivals, using chopsticks and eating certain foods, the extent of participation in which can be evaluated to assess their degree of association with the Chinese identity. For example, a Sarawakian-Chinese who speaks Mandarin and who celebrates Chinese cultural festivals is considered to be ‘more’ Chinese, than a Sarawakian-Chinese who does not speak Mandarin and who does not celebrate cultural events. Thus degrees of association with language and cultural practices are important for differentiating the extent of one’s ‘Chineseness’ within the community.

Many of the Sarawakian-Chinese perceive their Chinese ethnic identity as being progressively ‘diluted’ in relation to the one that exists in China. Significant in this process of dilution are educational and religious changes driven by Western influences, notably being educated in English and the conversion of religious faith to Christianity. The importance of being able to converse fluently in Mandarin was stressed by several of the respondents as being the ‘key’ to unlocking their ethnic identity. Not only does this allow for an enhanced level of communication and understanding between individuals but it also permits an improved comprehension of cultural practices.

This dynamism and change in identity leads to contradictory and shifting positions in how they the Sarawakian-Chinese relate to the ‘authentic’ identity in China. Several of the respondents expressed a sense of disappointment, even shame, that they were not living up to the expected standards of being a ‘proper’ or ‘authentic’ Chinese. Conversely, some of the Sarawakian-Chinese perceived their identity to be ‘Westernised’ and ‘superior’ to the Chinese in China, a trend which was especially notable within the English educated and English speaking community. Explanation of this attitude can be associated to colonialism, for as Sarup (1996) observes, the colonised were often perceived to be barbaric in nature. Subsequently, a positive association was made to adopting the behaviour and practices of the coloniser, reinforced by the colonised being given education and shown a ‘civilised’ way of life. Thus, the colonised take on
the identity of the colonisers, regarding those who retain their own culture as ‘barbaric’, ‘old-fashioned’, ‘uncivilised’ and ‘uncultured’ (ibid.). In the case of Sarawak, an ex-British colony, the ‘civilised’ thus belongs to the English culture and the ‘uncivilised’ to the Chinese culture.

The positive association with the west and notions of superiority are reinforced through positive political and economic images of the West, leading Sakai (1989) to observe that those who are exposed to Western education take on a Western discourse in the way they experience ‘others’. The practice of the adopting of Western behaviour was also observed in the Chinese diaspora in Australia, where those who could speak English were given the status of a ‘Westerner and thus an empire builder’ within the community (Meerwald, 2002: p.198). The influences of education, language ability, the process of colonisation, and the association of ‘positive’ and ‘modern’ characteristics with the colonisers, are all important forces in shaping identity.

Whilst the influence of foreign, particularly British culture has been significant in shaping the identity of the Sarawakian-Chinese, their physical separation from China has also reinforced their hybridity. This pattern is similar to the emergence of hybrid identities in other Chinese diasporic communities (Chen, 2004; Suryadinata, 1987; Tan, 2001; Wang, 1991; Tong and Chan, 2001; Tu, 1991b). These authors also suggest that the ‘disconnection’ with China for three decades had not only severed physical ties between the Chinese migrants and their homeland, it has also modified their relationships to become ‘less’ Chinese. Being ‘less’ Chinese is what some authors (Featherstone, 1996; Friedman, 1999; Lowe, 1991; Nurse, 1999) refer to as ‘hybridised identity’ in the context of ethnicity and diasporas. It is the result of acquiring a ‘localised’ Chinese consciousness, one that is influenced by the local culture, leading to a heterogeneous and hybridised community.
This sense of being ‘less’ Chinese is reinforced by visits to China, where the differences between the Sarawakian-Chinese and local people are apparent, reinforcing a differentiation of identity. Similar studies of various diaspora (see Kibria, 2003; Louie, 2004; Maruyama and Stronza, 2006) have found that return visits to the ancestral homeland have affirmed not a homeland identity but a hybridised one. For the Sarawakian-Chinese, the experiences of visiting their ancestral homeland only served to reinforce their sense of detachment from it, whilst affirming their sense of attachment to Sarawak. It is subsequently argued that the Sarawakian-Chinese’ experiences of travelling to China accentuate their sense of belonging to the periphery of the Chinese world, rather than its centre.

In relation to the development of identity, the experiences of the Sarawakian-Chinese support Ang’s (1998) observation that in different parts of the world, the Chinese have constructed new ways of living that are shaped by local circumstances. This anti-essentialist concept of ‘Chineseness’ discussed in Section 3.2.3, challenges the essentialist understandings of Chinese identity, recognising that the Sarawakian-Chinese re-define their own ways of being Chinese. Several authors (Ang, 1998; Wang, 1994) have proposed that the logic of anti-essentialism permits non-Mandarin speakers of Chinese ethnicity to be identified as Chinese, without having to live up to the norms of behaviour of the essential Chinese subject. Subsequently, the Sarawakian-Chinese’ visits to their ancestral homeland had only served to heighten their sense of hybridity and challenge notions of ‘belonging’ to China, they still felt ethnically Chinese.

The heterogeneity of the Sarawakian-Chinese identities are consistent with Geertz’s (1988) concept of hybridity, which emphasises that it is no longer possible to draw a line between cultural differences, as people are now living in a world that is: ‘a gradual spectrum of mixed-up differences’ (ibid.:148). Further similarities can also be drawn with Bhabha’s (1990) concept of the creation of a ‘third space’, a site where an individual’s ambiguity, complexity and hybridity are situated. In this third space, the Sarawakian-Chinese can sometimes be ‘this’, sometimes be ‘that’ and sometimes be ‘both’, with the emphasis of identity shifting in different contexts. For
example, one can be more Chinese in traditional settings, Sarawakian-Chinese in everyday life, or Malaysian if necessary. For Meerwald (2002), being a Malaysian-Chinese in Australia meant that her identity is always in a state of ambiguity, from which she argues she gains stability. It is subsequently argued that a state of ambiguity may offer an individual a form of stability, being able to move between identities to match appropriate contexts.

In conclusion, it is evident that the Sarawakian-Chinese are a heterogeneous group of people, divided by language, education and religion, leading to emerging ethnicities and identities. Therefore, identity is better understood as being multiple rather than singular in character, and is continuously subject to reassessment and renegotiation rather than being fixed. However, some of the Sarawakian-Chinese still feel connected with other Chinese diaspora across geopolitical boundaries and spatial distances, through both imagined and tangible common bonds. The crucial element in the discourse of the anti-essentialist view of identity is that it allows identity to be defined outside fixed parameters of what it means to be Chinese. By visiting China, the Sarawakian-Chinese tourists are forced to reflect upon their own traditions and values, as they confront the experiences of 'otherness'. Ultimately, the evaluation and defining of their own identity can only be accomplished by reference to the 'Other'. Consequently, travelling to the ancestral homeland is a significant event, forcing the diasporic traveller to evaluate and redefine their sense of Chineseness and identity.

8.8 Contribution to knowledge in the fields of tourism studies and identity

This research contributes to the development of knowledge in the fields of both tourism studies and identity. The development of knowledge can be contextualised around three main themes, which are: (i) enhancing understandings of travel and tourism from the perspectives of non-Western communities; (ii) furthering the comprehension of the significance of the ancestral
homeland for identity formation within diasporic communities; and (iii) evaluating how travel and tourism impacts upon identity formation.

8.8.1 Enhancing the understandings of travel and tourism from the perspectives of non-Western communities

The Western origins of tourism studies and the academic analysis of tourism have meant tourism has traditionally been defined from an occidental perspective. This research adds to the understanding and perspectives of tourism from a non-Western and hyphenated-community, a perspective that is sparse in the tourism literature. The Sarawakian-Chinese concept of tourism, one that emphasises familial piety and education, is different from the Western one that has stronger association with hedonism and self-determination. The research also adds to the understanding of the significance of travel and tourism in a diasporic community, highlighting the relationship between identity and tourism participation, and how ethnic identity influences travel patterns. The Sarawakian-Chinese emphasis on familial obligation as a key motivation for travel is similar to findings of research into the motivations of other diasporic communities (Stephenson, 2002; Nguyen and King, 1998, 2002; Duval, 2003; Basu, 2004; Ali, 2008; Baldassar, 2001).

Important to understanding the tourism behaviour of the Sarawakian-Chinese and the significance of travel within the community is the domination of ‘collective’ decision-making over ‘individual’ determination. Originating from Confucian principles, the concept of the collective includes not only the influence of the extended family but also cultural determinants. Subsequently, the ‘freedom of choice’ that would seem to be an inherent part of Western tourism is replaced by the expectation of family duty and cultural conformity. These forces not only shape the travel patterns of the Sarawakian-Chinese in terms of where they go, i.e. typically to China or to visit relatives in other diasporic communities, but also in terms of where they do not go to.
Cultural constraints, familial obligations and language barriers were found to be the three main factors that force the Sarawakian-Chinese to retract from engaging in patterns of tourism that reflect a higher degree of individual choice and self-determination. Although there is a growing demand amongst the third generation to travel more extensively and be free of the duty of visiting relatives, there remains a ‘cultural shame’ of displeasing one’s parents and being seen as individualistic or selfish. The kind of tourism that is not dependent on visiting relatives, even if motivated by a desire for education and knowledge, is typically held to be a ‘waste of money’ by the first generation. In their view, income should be used for investment in children’s school fees, including those of the extended family, to accumulate savings or to look after one’s parents in old age.

It is evident however that there is a growing heterogeneity of attitudes in the community over where to travel. Whilst language and religion continue to operate as barriers of where to travel, supporting the research of Ali (2008) into the Pakistani diaspora in the United Kingdom, there is increasing diversion between the English-educated and Chinese-educated Sarawakian-Chinese. The English-educated members of the community have a propensity for travel to English-speaking countries, including the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, which are perceived as being ‘modern’. However, the Chinese-educated Sarawakian-Chinese have a fear of visiting these places because of their lack of ability to speak English and unfamiliarity with the culture, preferring instead to visit the homeland in China.

The implication of this divergence for future generations is that the motivations for travel and the destinations of where people travel to are likely to be different. Not only would a changing pattern be representative of a cultural divergence within the community, but it may also reinforce cultural differentiation. As the English-speaking Sarawakian-Chinese gravitate to Anglo-Saxon
countries, they will become more acquainted with their culture and values, whilst the Chinese-speakers, will be likely to reinforce their Chinese identity through regular visits to the homeland.

8.8.2 The significance of travel to the ancestral homeland for identity formation in diasporic communities

The traditional discourse of diaspora, assumes that the homeland represents the place of eventual return, presupposing that dispersed groups of people would eventually return to their roots (Safran, 1991; Falzon, 2003; Cohen, 1997). However, Clifford (1997) and Gilroy (1993) argue that the focus of the diaspora’s relationship with the homeland should shift from ‘roots’ to ‘routes’, as not all diasporic groups will necessarily sustain the myth of returning to their roots. The findings of this research support the thesis of Clifford (1997) and Gilroy (1993), as the Sarawakian-Chinese do not sustain the myth of returning to their homeland in China, the majority having re-located and re-established their ‘homes’ in Sarawak.

It is also evident that the strength of association to the homeland is weakening within successive generations, with the third generation failing to retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their family’s land of origin, although the third generation Chinese-educated Sarawakian-Chinese still express a desire to travel to China. Whilst the first generation retain a strong association with their villages and extended family, the strength of association is diluted within the second generation, whose trips to China are typically undertaken as a duty of filial piety. The rationale to explain this weakening of ties to China through successive generations is linked to several factors. Typical ones, common to the diaspora of other peoples, include disassociation from the homeland culture with the passage of time, combined with the impact of physical dislocation and the influence of the cultural practices of the land of settlement. However, in the case of the Sarawakian-Chinese and unlike most other diaspora, this process of disassociation is compounded by the absence of an oral tradition within families and between the generations.
In other diaspora it is usual for the first generation to recount their experiences of childhood and growing up in the homeland (Ali, 2008; Stephenson, 2002), a tradition that is absent in the Sarawakian-Chinese community. Consequently, successive generations fail to develop an association with the homeland through a process of imaginative construction based upon older relatives accounts of their life. In the sense of a lack of oral tradition, the Chinese diaspora is unique, creating a situation where subsequent generations are not educated about their ancestral country, nor do they foster cultural, social and emotional ties with it. Thus, the social process of learning about one’s culture and heritage is not instilled through parental instruction, creating discontinuity between the past and present.

Given that only two studies in tourism (Stephenson, 2002; Ali, 2008) have made reference to the significance of story-telling in constructing the relationship between the ancestral homeland and the diasporic communities, this research has confirmed the importance of this tradition for cultural identification between diasporic communities and the homeland. It is probable that this lack of an oral tradition of experiences in the homeland, is a consequence of the political situation experienced by the first generation, with many having left at the time of communist revolution and not being allowed to return to China for three decades under the ‘closed door’ policy.

Although the third generation have greater opportunities for travel to China than previous generations of diaspora, in the absence of accounts of the experiences of their parents and grandparents in the homeland, travel to China may not be sufficient to rebuild a cultural identification with it. Possessing an image of a destination, including the homeland is essential to installing the motivation for travel, and the oral tradition amongst diaspora has a crucial role to play in its creation. Although the Sarawakian-Chinese diaspora may get its images through other mediums, including Chinese films and media, these do not have the emotional proximity or intensity of coming from ones relatives.
8.8.3 Understanding how travel and tourism impacts upon identity formation

The thesis also contributes to the emerging debate in tourism studies that seeks to evaluate the significance of travel and tourism upon identity formation. Many Sarawakian-Chinese continue to hold an essentialist view of their ethnicity as a product of a natural and biological phenomenon, rather than interpreting their Chineseness as a fluid form of cultural production that is subject to change from other influences. They consider themselves to be Chinese because they were born to Chinese parents whose ancestors originated from China, a form of ‘Chinese gene’. For the Sarawakian-Chinese, their Chinese ethnicity is reinforced by the Malaysian government through identity cards and other statutes. Further reinforcement of possessing a Chinese identity comes from reactions to the physical characteristics of the Sarawakian-Chinese, which often makes them Chinese in the eyes of others. Subsequently, the impact of visiting China upon their ethnic identity was to reinforce their sense of biological and physiological similarities to the Chinese, even if culturally their identity remained Sarawakian-Chinese.

Whilst travel to China reinforced notions of being biologically similar to the Chinese, it also reinforced significant cultural differences that act as a means of demarcation in identities. These were especially evident for the non-Mandarin speakers and those who had converted from Buddhism to Christianity. The inability to communicate and to join in cultural practices, such as worshipping ancestors and Buddhist rituals, inevitably led to a sense of alienation from mainstream Chinese culture. However, it is also evident that there is a tendency for the Sarawakian-Chinese to ‘pick and mix’ their identity, rejecting aspects of Chinese culture they view as ‘distasteful’, whilst embracing elements that install feelings of pride. For example there is a strong association with China’s five thousand year history and recent rapid economic development, whilst a rejections of some cultural practices, such as spitting in the street. At times of the rejection of Chinese cultural practices, a common tendency was a differentiation and re-definition of the Sarawakian-Chinese culture as being more ‘civilised’. Overall, the impact of
travel to China upon their ethnic identity was to heighten the differences between the Sarawakian-Chinese and the Chinese, accentuating a sense of hybridity.

The accentuation of a sense of hybridity, reinforced the concept of the 'centre' as the 'periphery' and the 'periphery' as 'centre', emphasising Sarawak as the 'homeland' and not 'China' as was explained in Section 8.6. This is a significant finding about how travel to China is influencing identity as no research currently exists in tourism studies that has examined how the *huaren*'s identity is constructed in relation to their visits to the ancestral homeland. There is a general absence of research in tourism studies of how travel to the homeland and other destinations influences the identities of hybrid communities and diaspora. Consequently, this research is original because it not only highlights the complexities of identity formation, but also contributes to understanding the influence of travel and tourism upon reconstructing identity.

8.9 Limitations of study

As for any research there are limitations to the methods and transferability of the results of the study, which are explained in sub-sections 8.9.1 and 8.9.2.

8.9.1 Application and transferability of findings

The interpretations of being Chinese and the experiences of visiting China described in Chapters Six and Seven are unique to the Sarawakian-Chinese community. This study does not attempt to present a universalistic picture of diasporic travel and tourism, rather it is suggested that due to its framing in an interpretivist paradigm and its qualitative character, the findings may be unique to the ethnic Chinese in Sarawak. The narratives embody the political, culture, religious and linguistic contexts of the first, second and third generations of Sarawakian-Chinese. However, the research is slightly skewed towards the second and third generations because the
researcher was not able to communicate in some of the dialects of the first generation. Without a good translator, the researcher had to abandon the opportunity to interview some of the first generation who had shown interest in the research. The applicability of the research findings is also skewed towards the Buddhists and those of the Christian faith and not those of other faiths, including the Islamic. This was largely a consequence of the ‘guanxi’ networks within the Chinese community, which as explained in Section 5.5.1 makes the finding of respondents extremely difficult without introduction, hence the reliance on purposive and snowball sampling.

8.9.2 Researcher's background and experiences

Since the researcher had not visited her own ancestral village, she was restricted in her experiences and was not able to ‘enter’ into the framework of shared experiences with those who had visited their home villages. Based on the epistemological assumption of this research, the best way to understand how the Sarawakian-Chinese negotiate their identity is to locate oneself in the research. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the researcher has participated in an inclusive tour to Beijing. However, the ethnographic accounts of the Sarawakian-Chinese community also included visits to other parts of China where the researcher has not visited, including her own ancestral village. In examining the identity of the Sarawakian-Chinese, the researcher’s personal background also played a significant role in influencing the research process. Although this research had included a wide sampling of different groups of Sarawakian-Chinese, the researcher’s gender, age, religion and educational background still posed some limitations to the scope of this study, as were discussed in Section 5.6.1.
CHAPTER NINE:

CONCLUSION

This chapter:

- explains the relevance of the key findings emerging from the research for understanding the relationship between tourism and ethnic identity formation in the Sarawakian-Chinese community; and

- identifies the potential for further research with the huaren communities and suggests future tourism research agendas.

9.1 Explanations of research findings

As was emphasised in Chapter Two, the Sarawakian-Chinese are not a homogeneous grouping but have multiple identities that are influenced by variances of local politics, education, language and religion. Based upon the findings of this research, it is evident that tourism also plays a significant role in contributing to the construction of the Sarawakian-Chinese identity. Across all the generations, the experiences of tourism, the motivations of travel and the significance of visiting the ancestral homeland have impacted upon ethnic identity. For example, understanding of tourism were defined differently from the Western ones, i.e. emphasising collective identity, family connections, filial piety and education, suggesting that the understanding of tourism is influenced by cultural values which are distinctively Chinese.

The character of specific ethnic identities was emphasised in visits to China, which the Sarawakian-Chinese recognised as their ancestral homeland but not as their ‘home’. The degree of association with the ancestral homeland varied between generations, as did the degree of emotional attachment which influenced motivations for visiting China. The visits to
China reinforced the differences that exist between people there and the Sarawakian-Chinese community in Sarawak.

It is commonly perceived by the Sarawakian-Chinese that there is a gradation of degree of ‘Chineseness’ within which one could be marked as being ‘more’ or ‘less’ Chinese. For example, a Chinese person who lives in China would be considered as possessing an ‘authentic’ identity, being an indigenous person, whilst the identity of the Sarawakian-Chinese is regarded as being ‘less’ authentic. Cultural and religious practices are also considered to be practised at their ‘purest’ form within China, as it is the place that is perceived to symbolise the core essence of all things Chinese, which are held to be fixed and unchanging. Besides being perceived to be the cultural capital of the Pan-Chinese community, China is also held in esteem as an emerging global economic power, whilst simultaneously possessing the longest history of the Chinese race.

Although the Sarawak-Chinese who live in the periphery of spatial ‘Chineseness’ perceive their Chinese identity as ‘less’ than the Chinese in China, within the Sarawakian-Chinese community gradations of ‘Chineseness’ also exist, based upon criteria of religion, education and language. For example, the Sarawakian-Chinese who embrace Buddhism, are Chinese-educated and speak Mandarin, are regarded as ‘more’ Chinese than those who have converted to Christianity, who are less familiar with ritual practice and do not speak Chinese languages.

This affirmation of the degree of perceived ‘Chineseness’ is a significant outcome for the Sarawakian-Chinese in their travel and tourism to China. For the first and second generations Sarawakian-Chinese, their visits to China typically meant that they could strengthen their degree of ‘Chineseness’, changing from being ‘less’ Chinese to become ‘more’ Chinese. Through the re-acquiring of cultural capital and having close encounters with ‘significant others’, their ethnic
identity was re-affirmed and re-authenticated. However, for the third generation, their experiences of visiting China only served to reinforce their Sarawakian-Chinese identity, one that is influenced by Western education, and within which inherent social and cultural behaviours are often self-perceived as being more ‘refined’ than those of the Chinese in China.

The first generation Sarawakian-Chinese who were born in China and emigrated to Sarawak strongly emphasised the importance of maintaining familial relationships and filial piety in their motivations for tourism participation. Their journeys to China are not regarded as a casual or hedonistic affair but are motivated by a combination of duty and obligation. Their emphasis on family connections and loyalty towards their place of origin, reflects their understanding of tourism as being defined by the visiting of relatives in China, and those living in diasporic communities in other countries.

The second generation also placed emphasis on familial ties in their travel motivations, but they also regarded education as an important aspect of their motivation to participate in tourism. They travelled to China to be re-educated and to re-familiarised with their Chinese heritage and culture. However, the process of visiting relatives in China and the maintenance of relationships with them, was found to be typically mediated by the first generation. This suggests that China is more significant for cultural reasons to the second generation, rather than for the building of personal relationships with their relatives in China. In the future natural absence of the first generation, the extent to which travel to China will be used to maintain these familial ties is unknown. It may be that travel to China becomes weighted towards the re-affirmation of one’s Chinese ‘side’ and visiting cultural and historic sites, rather than visiting family.

The gradation in the reduction of importance of the maintenance of family relationships as the key motivators for travel, continues with the third generation, with the key motivations for,
amongst this generation being education and relaxation. Trips to China were primarily undertaken as an element of duty and respect to the first generation, their grandparents, and to also visit ‘tourist’ sites when possible. The relationship with their relatives in China was virtually either non-existent or emotionally detached. However, although the concept of tourism held by this generation is different than the one understood by the first generation, it is also different than that based on the hedonist principle endemic to mainstream Western tourism.

Whilst the third generation showed less emotional attachment to their extended families of the ancestral homeland, they recognised China as their ancestral homeland, whilst Sarawak was considered as ‘home’. The Sarawakian-Chinese characterised their ‘home’ as being a place where their immediate family lived and which had a familiar environment. For the second and third generations who have either grown up or been born in Sarawak, this finding may not be unexpected, but it emphasises a closer association and connection to Sarawak than China. It is evident that the first generation have also distanced themselves from the mental construction of China as ‘home’. Despite having been born and spent their formative years there, the sentiment of ‘belonging’ is less strong than it is for Sarawak. They displayed no desire to return to China to live, unlike other first generation diaspora of different cultures, who often maintain the ‘myth of return’.

### 9.2 Suggestions for future research

As Chinese communities around the world have become progressively more heterogeneous, separated from their Chinese roots and divided by language, origin, political orientation, class and legal status (Chen, 1992; Benton and Pieke, 1998), new ethnicities and identities are being produced (Kwong, 1997), as in the case of the Sarawakian-Chinese. As is indicated by Wu (1994), and reinforced through this study, the Chinese living in the peripheries can conceptualise their own Chineseness by incorporating indigenous language and culture, without
losing their sense of having a Chinese identity. The complexity and difficulty, of defining ‘the’ Chinese identity is underlined by Skeldon (2003), arguing that any attempt to relate the Chinese diaspora with the population of China is meaningless, as the migrants come from a series of very small parts of what is a vast territory, each with their own cultural identity. These perpetual complexities strongly suggest that this research has merely scratched the issues of huaren identity and the following three subsections explore the need for future research.

9.2.1 Future research theme (1): The longitudinal changing identity of the Sarawakian-Chinese

This research has examined the experiences of three generations of Sarawakian-Chinese, experiences that are shaped and defined by time. As identity is socially constructed and is always in evolution, it is therefore argued that the perceptions of the Sarawakian-Chinese identity are also subject to change. With nostalgia embedded in the normal aging process, it has been suggested personal nostalgia may be closely related to life stages (Davis, 1979). Similarly, Lowenthal (1985) and Dickinson (1996) argued that as people aged, they became more interested in their cultural roots, in things historic and in developing a greater understanding of the past. It is therefore suggest that longitudinal studies be carried out with the same subjects to ascertain how their sense of nostalgia for China as the ‘homeland’ and its associated culture changes with time, and also how their subsequent perceptions of Sarawakian-Chinese identity are influenced by their journeys to their ancestral homeland.

Although not a focus of this study because they are presently young children, there is now a fourth generation of Sarawakian-Chinese, whose perception of their ethnic identity is evolving with the changing social conditions of Sarawak which are increasingly subject to Chinese influence, reflecting China’s increasing political and economic power. There is also a significant popular Chinese entertainment industry that permeates the Sarawakian-Chinese culture, bringing a sense of resurgence of Chinese culture amongst the hybridised community. These changes
may bring a new dynamic to the Sarawakian-Chinese community and are likely to influence the
cultural construction of Chineseness. It is likely that the amalgam of these factors will influence
the travelling patterns of the Sarawakian-Chinese.

9.2.2 Future research theme (2): The significance of religion and tourism on identity

During the research it emerged that religious denomination is significant to the tourism
experiences of the Sarawakian-Chinese whilst in China. It was evident that the Sarawakian-
Chinese Christians found the experiences and cultural practices in their ancestral homeland
awkward, whilst the Buddhists did not. As religion is often embedded in the cultural identity of a
community, conversion to another religion may lead to a degree of disenfranchising from the
mainstream culture and community. However, like the Sarawakian-Chinese, in order to conserve
an element of Chinese identity within Christianity, the Chinese theologians have proposed a
localised Chinese form of Christianity. Subsequently, the impact which this conversion has upon
their ethnic identity and the influences it has upon their ancestral homeland, require further
research.

Collaboration of the interpretive ethnographic findings about the religious dimension came from
the fact that some of the respondents had returned to their ancestral villages and built churches.
This process of building churches signifies a changing of religious landscapes of the local
villages from Buddhism. In this context, there is a parallel between the travel and tourism
activities of the diaspora and earlier Christian missionaries to China who actively sought religious
converts. The impact of the introduction of new religions brought with tourism upon the villages
requires further investigation.
9.2.3 Future research theme (3): Research design

The semi-structured interviews of the Sarawakian-Chinese community were collected in Sarawak and participant-observation was carried out in China. It is suggested that for future research, in order to gain a better in-depth understanding of how the experiences of tourism in China influence identity, a purposive sample of respondents could be chosen whose identity would be examined before and after their journeys to the homeland. The research programme would be designed to ensure that the experiences of these respondents could be explored within a ‘closer set-up’, designed to establish a more detailed association between their identity and their travel experiences. In addition, semi-structured interviews could also be conducted ‘in situ’ in China to learn about the actual encounters and experiences of the Sarawakian-Chinese during their visits in China. Alongside the semi-structured interviews, future research could include an auto-ethnography of the researcher’s travel experiences to the ancestral village.

9.3 Postscript

The interpretive paradigm of this research study is premised on the belief that the insider’s views provide an alternative and additional lens to understanding the phenomenon being studied. The paradigm also allows for the identification of differences within a seemingly homogenous group. As Pelto and Pelto (1978:54) assert:

... cultural behaviour should always be studied and categorized in terms of the inside view – the actor’s definition – of human events. That is, the units of conceptualization ... should be ‘discovered’ by analyzing the cognitive processes of the people studied, rather than ‘imposed’ from cross-cultural (hence, ethnocentric) classifications of behaviour

Consequently, as Blummer (2002) notes, the researcher is obliged to enter the social setting, becoming one of the social actors. Whilst gaining an insider’s perspective has benefit, there are also certain disadvantages. As Minichiello et al (1995) point out, insider familiarity necessitates
even greater vigilance because with familiarity often comes a ‘taken-for-granted stance toward the informants’ meanings, language and concepts’. Therefore, it is essential that the researcher is transparent with her identity and engages in a process of reflexivity throughout the research process.

Hunt (1989, p. 42) has described the research process as ‘the discovery of self through the detour of the other’. Field-based interaction with fellow Sarawakian-Chinese, and the process of self-reflexivity that followed, provided opportunities for reflection of my own experiences in Sarawak and my travel experiences in China. This challenged and expanded my understanding of my ‘routes to roots’ from both academic and experiential perspectives. This study was therefore an exploration in academic and personal development. This section reviews the personal biography of the researcher and the reflexive accounts of her experiences in the research process.

9.3.1 Reflect on my personal encounter with the ‘Others’

During the first year of my PhD studies, I encountered different literatures that examined debates in cultural studies about subjectivity and cultural identity. Besides being inundated with literature to read, I was also struggling and challenged by the concepts that ethnic identity is socially constructed and no identity is ever fixed. These concepts were difficult for me because up to that point in my life I only knew one type of Chinese, and that was the Sarawakian-Chinese. I also perceived the Chinese in China to be authentic in their culture and identity, fixed as an essentialist identity. I never contemplated that practices within Chinese culture might change over time and vary by place. As I perceived all Chinese to share core characteristics of ‘Chineseness’, I imagined myself to have similar Chinese characteristics with other Chinese living in other places.
However, as I began assimilating the variants of ethnicity based on the different experiences of diasporic groupings recounted in the academic literature, and became aware of the various definitions of being Chinese in different locales, I began to see similarities and nuances that I had not noticed before. I was able to relate to certain aspects of Chinese culture and values, but not in areas where I felt a complete stranger, an ‘outsider’. For example, celebrating the Chinese Spring Festival for the first time in the United Kingdom in 1998 was an extraordinary experience for me, as was being with other Chinese students from other places than Sarawak. Although I was familiar with the event, I was not aware of how others celebrate the festival, assuming that the Chinese everywhere celebrate the festival in the same as we did in Sarawak, which in turn was no different than what the Chinese did in China.

I accepted an invitation to a friend’s house to celebrate the occasion and I was amongst many ‘other’ Chinese in the house. As much as I recognised some of the food on the table, I realised I was a stranger to many other types of food served. How the food was prepared and served and the ‘well wishes’ that went round the table were completely alien to me. I stood in the corner as if I was a stranger to something I felt I should be familiar with, not knowing what to do nor what was expected of me. Sensing my unfamiliarity, a Chinese person who was invited to the festival approached me and asked, ‘Are you Chinese?’ I whispered, ‘Yes’. The next question that followed made me feel even worse, ‘Are you pure Chinese?’ No one had ever questioned my ethnic ‘purity’ before! Again, I whispered ‘yes’. Sensing her confusion and to justify my ‘purity’, I said, ‘We just do it … differently!’ I left the celebration that day feeling slightly ‘impure’.

I also realised that my image of the Chinese in China was a stereotypical image of a Chinese person of the past. On one occasion, I was informed by a Chinese acquaintance that divorce is just as common in China as in Western society and cohabitation is on the increase. I was incredulous because I expected the Chinese to have more family-oriented values than the Sarawakian-Chinese, where divorce is still uncommon and stigmatised. Through such
experiences and encounters with the Chinese, I began to appreciate the nuances of differences that exist within the Pan-Chinese community.

In my investigation of the experiences of the Sarawakian-Chinese visiting China, I have found that even after their visits there, they continued to construct China as the cultural capital of the *huaren* community. Many of my study subjects assumed all Chinese to be the same, failing to comprehend the reasons why I needed to interview their friends and relatives, as they assumed I would not find any difference in perceptions and experiences. I could understand why they thought Chinese culture in China to be authentic, empathising with their views because essentially China is the only cultural ‘anchor’ for them, a key point of reference for ‘cultural norms’. In a rapidly changing world, the impacts of which are felt in Sarawakian-Chinese society, China represents a ‘stable foundation’ on which to ground identity.

### 9.3.2 The dilemma of my professional experience

During my three year teaching experience in Sarawak, I had the privilege of meeting and teaching students who originated from different schools. Some of my students had attended Chinese-medium schools, whilst others had attended those using Malay, whilst only a very few came from the English-medium schools. I found it strange and frustrating to be teaching Tourism Management modules to many students who had never participated in tourism, with many of the taught concepts of tourism being from a Western perspective, as all the textbooks that were imported from United Kingdom, Australia and the United States.

It was evident that in my discussions with the students concerning their aspirations and ‘dreams’, the Chinese-educated students aspired to visit Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong and China, not contemplating other countries where Chinese is not widely spoken, e.g. Australia and New Zealand. Having attended a Chinese-medium primary school, I could empathise with their
feelings and preferences that not being able to speak the language of the host society places one in a vulnerable position. By contrast the few English-educated students hoped and expected to visit many other countries that were further away, displaying less desire to visit China.

I could identify with the fears of my students who attended Chinese-medium schools because when I was younger, whilst attending Chinese primary school from Monday to Friday, my family also attended English-speaking church on Sunday. I used to dread going to church on Sunday because I felt awkward to be amongst people who spoke and behaved differently from my ‘normal’ environment. However, as I moved from primary to a secondary Malay-medium school, my confidence in speaking English grew, and I gradually had confidence in visiting other English-speaking countries.

### 9.3.3 My concepts of tourism

I recognise that the schools that I attended and the languages I speak have influenced my perceptions of tourism. My concepts of tourism also changed as I moved from one phase of my life to the next. My initial experience with travel and tourism was much influenced by my parents who were civil servants for more than thirty years before their retirement. During their time of working for the government, my parents were given travel incentives to visit other states in Malaysia, which we subsequently did. In addition, my paternal grandparents lived in Sibu whilst my maternal grandparents lived in Kapit. Whilst we lived in Kuching, my parents would travel to Sibu and Kapit, so we travelled with them during vacation periods. It was a duty and an obligation to travel to see our grandparents every school holidays.

Whilst my parents worked for the government, we visited mostly historical and heritage sites, as my parents placed a heavy emphasis on learning and education. It was only during the very short school breaks that I ever visited beach resorts. Recalling my experiences on these beach
resorts, we often did not emerge from the shade until early evening, and only the Western tourists were found sunbathing under the sun. One of the main reasons for not sunbathing was because the thought of acquiring a tan was a ridiculous idea, it being every Chinese girl’s dream to stay fair.

9.3.4 My identity and the ancestral homeland

After I graduated and started working, my holiday plans never included visiting China. I had never thought about visiting China until I started my PhD, and even then, it was not the initial plan to engage in participant-observation method in China. My knowledge of China came mostly from history lessons at school, through the television and the media, not from other family members. My grandparents never recounted their stories of living in China, whilst my parents have seldom spoken of their relatives in China, even though my mother had been to China three times. My knowledge and perceptions of China were therefore not gained through personal experiences of the family through formal history lessons.

My visit to China as a part of the fieldwork was memorable at best and confusing at times. Like many other members of the tour party, I was impressed with China. I never anticipated observing such a multitude of high-rise buildings and cars, and the big advertising billboards struck me as impressive. I was expecting to see workers in the fields stretching for miles and the mountains that lined the edge of the landscape. Instead I saw a modernised, dynamic and rapidly developing China. I was also amazed at the histories of China and even more impressed with the tour guide’s ability to articulate the histories so well. We visited many historical sites and were shown many palaces and Chinese gardens. I could empathise with the sense of pride displayed by the Sarawakian-Chinese in ‘their’ heritage. Temples and palaces with dragon and phoenix sculptures were the features that lined the landscapes. However, by the end of my first day I felt everything was ‘too Chinese’ for me, I thought one has to be ‘very’ Chinese to appreciate all these symbols.
Being with the tour group, we were ‘shielded’ from the ‘outside’ world and we were constantly reminded to be vigilant with our belongings, as being a ‘foreign tourist’ we were an easy target for pick-pockets. If we needed to speak to the waitresses, we would require the tour guide to translate, even though most of us spoke Mandarin. On the few occasions I ventured out on my own, thinking that being able to speak Mandarin I would be able to find and make my way in China, it was often difficult to communicate. It was not long before I had to retreat from my ‘big adventure’ because I was a stranger to ‘their’ culture and ‘their’ language. They did not seem to use the same phrases of Mandarin that I use, often leading to misunderstandings, and necessitating that I even needed to ask the tour guide for a teaspoon, a carrier bag, internet facility and a glass of water.

9.3.5 My identity as a Sarawakian-Chinese

I have never known the story of how my grandparents came to Sarawak or the reasons for leaving their families. From the stories that I read and the feature films that I have seen, I assumed they left China because the village was too poor and they were looking for better opportunities elsewhere. I just assumed their stories would be similar to many other stories that we heard of Chinese people escaping their country because of severe war and famine. As little as I know of my grandparents, I knew both my maternal and paternal grandparents came from the Ming Ching village, Foochow Province in China and came to settle in Sarawak before it became part of Malaysia. My paternal grandfather came to Sarawak when he was 27 years old and my grandmother was 17 years old. My grandfather was an only child and my grandmother belonged to a family of seven children. In Sarawak, my grandfather worked as a carpenter to support his wife and eight children.
My maternal grandfather came to Sarawak aged 35 and my grandmother was 18 years younger than him. My grandfather was a farmer in China but after his arrival in Sarawak, he set up his small business to support his family. In order to support their family of eleven children, my grandmother worked as a seamstress. My grandfather had two brothers and my grandmother had a brother and a sister in China. I do not know what faith they belonged to when they were in China but both my grandmothers became Christians after they settled in Sarawak. Both my maternal and paternal grandparents never spoke of their lives in China or their families there. They have never expressed any desire to re-settle back in China, although my maternal grandparents did visit their village, when the border was re-opened.

My father was born in Sibu and my mother was born in Kapit and they moved to settle in Kuching. My father took on a job as an auditor working for the government while my mother became a primary school teacher. Although of Chinese descent, my parents never expressed any desire to live in China because their immediate family is in Sarawak. Being a third generation Sarawakian-Chinese, China was a distant land and a distant country to me, having been born in Kuching and lived there all my life.

I lived in Kuching city and in my schooling years, I attended a Chinese-medium primary school for six years. After that I attended a Malay-medium secondary school for another five years and another two years of A-level. My four year of university was a mixture of courses conducted in both English and Malay languages. I was brought up in a Christian home and we were part of an English-speaking Methodist congregation. At home, we speak a mixture of different languages and dialects, my parents use Foochow and my father converses in Foochow and Mandarin with me. Whilst I understand Foochow, I reply in Mandarin. With my mother and sisters, we speak Foochow, Hokkien and English. We speak Hokkien because we live in a predominantly Hokkien speaking community.
I always used to identify myself as Chinese because my parents are Chinese. My Sarawakian-Chinese identity only became apparent when I visited China, especially when I needed to separate myself from being misunderstood as being a Chinese national from China. Being of Chinese descent, my family celebrates most of the Chinese festivals, whilst being Christians we also celebrate and observe all the Christian events, including Christmas and Easter. Due to our Christian belief, our house is not decorated with any Chinese religious symbols such as the dragons or the phoenix or the Chinese lanterns. However, having Buddhists and Muslims friends in close proximity, I am aware of their religions and their cultures. At home, at study or at work, none of our family members ever wear traditional Chinese costume, none of us even having ever owned one. Growing up, I was familiar with Enid Blyton, Nancy Drew, and European fairy tales, watched Sesame Street and I know most of the Disney cartoon characters, yet my memory of Chinese heroes, sages, cartoon characters is vague.

As an ethnic Chinese born in Sarawak, I am aware that I remain a ‘second-class’ citizen in Malaysia, nevertheless ‘home’ remains in Kuching, my visit to China made me aware that China is not my home. My parents have never ‘forced’ any of their children to visit China though they were happy that my sister and I had at least visited China once. Having visited my ancestral homeland and recognised the past is significant to my Chinese ethnic identity, my identity as a Sarawakian-Chinese remained unchanged. I feel more ‘comfortable’ as a Sarawakian-Chinese in Malaysia than as a Sarawakian-Chinese in China, being happy to be treated as a ‘foreigner’ and a ‘tourist’ there because I did not feel I belonged there.

In retrospect, if I could go back in time to that house where I celebrated my first Spring Festival in the UK in 1998 with other Chinese friends, I would be able to give a definite answer about my ethnicity. I would feel assured of my identity as a Sarawakian-Chinese, knowing that ‘authenticity’ or ‘purity’ does not exist, and ethnic identities are perpetually changing. Visiting China gave me many insights of the Chinese world and it is part of a journey towards personal
understanding and self-definition of my ethnic identity, one that belongs to a five-thousand year history.
APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Semi-structured Interview Questions

A. Tourism participation
1. How often do you participate in non-working type of travelling?
2. What motivates you to travel?
3. What do you understand by tourism and do you participate in tourism?
4. Do you consider visiting relatives as part of your holiday plan?

B. Tourism Experiences in China
1. What motivated you to visit China?
2. Who did you go with?
3. Where did you go?
4. When did you go?
5. Would you go again?
6. Do you have relatives in China?
7. Have you made extended visits to your/parents’ village in China for the purpose of sending your children to receive education in China or to arrange marriage for your children there?
8. Do you own land/property or have any investment in China?
9. Do you regularly send money back to your family or relatives in China?
10. How often do you visit your relatives (if any) in China?
C. Home

1. Where were you born?

2. Do you still visit the place where you were born? (for the first generation)

3. Where do you consider it a home (Sarawak or China or both)?

4. Do your (grand)parents ever talk about their lives in China and why did they leave China?

D. Identity

1. How similar or difference do you feel to the Chinese in China (language/culture/history/religion) in China?

2. What does being Chinese mean to you?

3. Do you think it is important for you and your children to visit China?

4. How important is it for you and your children to celebrate any Chinese events?

5. How important is it for you and your children to know, maintain and visit their relatives in China?

6. How important is it for you and your children to know Chinese history and the history of China?

7. How important is it for you and your children to be fluent in Mandarin and/or Chinese dialects?

8. Do you think that your religious background had any impact on your sense of Chinese identity?

9. What type of school did you attend? [Primary (English/Chinese/Malay), Secondary, Tertiary]?

10. Are you a member of any Chinese clubs or associations?

11. Do you subscribe to or regularly read Chinese newspapers produced in China or Malaysia?

12. What tv programs do you watch? (Chinese, English and Malay (% of time spent watching):}
13. Do you consider yourself to have a religious faith?

14. What language are you most fluent in? (show cards with 3 different languages)

E. Demographic Profile

1. Gender:

2. Age:

3. Generation:

A. Time:

B. Location:
Appendix 2: Semi-structured Interview Questions (pilot study)

Semi-structured Interview Questions
(Pilot Study)

A. Tourism participation
1. What do you understand by tourism
2. How often do you travel as a tourist?

B. Tourism experiences in China
1. What motivated you to visit your home village in China?
2. Who did you go with?
3. What is the name of your home village?
4. When did you go?
5. Would you go again?
6. Do you have relatives in (the village) China?
7. How often do you visit your relatives (if any) in China?

C. Home
1. Where is your home?
2. Do you want to go back to China to live?
3. Where do you consider it a home (Sarawak or China or both)?

D. Identity
1. What does being Chinese mean to you?
2. Do you think it is important for you and your children to visit China?
3. How important is it for you to celebrate any Chinese events?
4. How important is it for you to know, maintain and visit their relatives in China?
5. How important is it for you to know Chinese history and the history of China?
6. How important is it for you to be fluent in Mandarin and/or Chinese dialects?
7. Do you think that your religious background had any impact on your sense of Chinese identity?
8. What type of school did you attend? [Primary (English/Chinese/Malay), Secondary, Tertiary]?
9. Are you a member of any Chinese clubs or associations?
10. Do you subscribe to or regularly read Chinese newspapers produced in China or Malaysia?
11. What tv programmes do you watch? (Chinese, English and Malay (% of time spent watching these programmes.
12. Do you consider yourself to have a religious faith?
13. What language are you most fluent in?

E. Demographic Profile

1. Gender:
2. Age:
3. Generation:

A. Time:
B. Location:
Appendix 3: Semi-structured Interview Questions: Rationale for Revision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pilot study</th>
<th>Main study</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Tourism participation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. What do you understand by tourism</td>
<td>1. How often do you participate in non-working type of travelling?</td>
<td>Respondents seemed uncomfortable to relate their travelling ‘tales’ as tourists and it was initially thought that because these questions generated only ‘thin descriptions’, these questions were not worth pursuing. However, it was later realized that the Chinese respondents were less inclined to comment on tourism because tourism infers a lifestyle of hedonism which is contradictory to Chinese values that emphasize on hard-working and being thrifty. Therefore a series of questions was revised and when the focus shifted from ‘tourism’ to ‘travel’, it was easier to engage in discussions with the respondents.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. How often do you travel as a tourist?</td>
<td>2. What motivates you to travel?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. What do you understand by tourism and do you participate in tourism?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Do you consider visiting relatives as part of your holiday plan?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B. TOURISM EXPERIENCES IN CHINA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. What motivated you to visit your home village in China?</td>
<td>1. What motivated you to visit China?</td>
<td>It was uncertain at the time how best to engage in discussion with those who might have left their village under less than pleasant condition and therefore, in some questions the specificity of ‘home village’ was not used. Further, it was also deemed better not to use the phrase ‘home</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Who did you go with?</td>
<td>2. Who did you go with?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. What is the name of your home village?</td>
<td>3. Where did you go?</td>
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Pilot study

Main study

Rationale
| 5. | Would you go again?       | 6. | Do you have relatives in (the village) China? |
| 7. | How often do you visit your relatives (if any) in China? |
| 7. | Have you made extended visits to your/parents’ village in China for the purpose of sending your children to receive education in China or to arrange marriage for your children there? |
| 8. | Do you own land/property or have any investment in China? |
| 9. | Do you regularly send money back to your family or relatives in China? |
| 10. | How often do you visit your relatives (if any) in China? |

### C. Home

| 1. | Where is your home? |
| 2. | Do you want to go back to China to live? |
| 3. | Where do you consider it a home (Sarawak or China or both)? |
| 1. | Where were you born? |
| 2. | Do you still visit the place where you were born? (for the first generation) |
| 3. | Where do you consider it a home (Sarawak or China or both)? |
| 4. | Do your (grand)parents ever talk about their lives in China and why did they |

Home was often thought of as a physical location and therefore respondents would regard home as their present dwelling. When the question was changed to the location to which they were born, it allowed the respondents to reflect on the concepts of home(s). The question whether they intended to go back to China had to be rephrased because ‘to go back to China’ often implied to ‘retire to one’s death-bed’ in Chinese.
The meaning of being Chinese was difficult for the respondents to articulate. They often responded better by comparing themselves to ‘others’ who are not Chinese to identify their own identity. Therefore, the question of how similar or different do they feel to the Chinese in China provided a comparative subject. Questions concerning the aspiration for the next generations were also included later in the main study to identify whether Chinese events, maintenance of familial connections, history and language are of significance to the next generations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D.Identity</th>
<th>1. What does being Chinese mean to you?</th>
<th>1. How similar or difference do you feel to the Chinese in China (language/culture/history/religion) in China?</th>
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<tr>
<td>2. Do you think it is important for you and your children to visit China?</td>
<td>2. What does being Chinese mean to you?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. How important is it for you to celebrate any Chinese events?</td>
<td>3. Do you think it is important for you and your children to visit China?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. How important is it for you to know, maintain and visit their relatives in China?</td>
<td>4. How important is it for you and your children to celebrate any Chinese events?</td>
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<td>5. How important is it for you to know Chinese history and the history of China?</td>
<td>5. How important is it for you and your children to know, maintain and visit their relatives in China?</td>
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<td>6. How important is it for you to be fluent in Mandarin and/or Chinese dialects?</td>
<td>6. How important is it for you and your children to know Chinese history and the history of China?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Do you think that your religious background had any impact on your sense of Chinese identity?</td>
<td>7. How important is it for you and your children to be fluent in Mandarin and/or Chinese dialects?</td>
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<td>8. What type of school did you</td>
<td>8. Do you think that your religious background had any impact on your</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Are you a member of any Chinese clubs or associations?</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Do you subscribe to or regularly read Chinese newspapers produced in China or Malaysia?</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>What TV programs do you watch? (Chinese, English and Malay (% of time spent watching):</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Do you consider yourself to have a religious faith?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>What language are you most fluent in?</td>
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<tbody>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>What type of school did you attend? [Primary (English/Chinese/Malay), Secondary, Tertiary]?</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Are you a member of any Chinese clubs or associations?</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>Do you subscribe to or regularly read Chinese newspapers produced in China or Malaysia?</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Do you consider yourself to have a religious faith?</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>What language are you most fluent in?</td>
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### Appendix 4: Interviewees’ Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name³</th>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Education⁴ (P⁵, S⁶ and T⁷)</th>
<th>Language⁸</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Darlene</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Headmistress</td>
<td>English (P, S and T)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Adrian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>41</td>
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<td>Teacher</td>
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<td>English and Chinese</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>Saleslady</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>Chinese (P and S)</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Allan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Chinese (P and S)</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

³ The following names have been changed to protect the privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of the interviewees.

⁴ Referred to interviewee’s medium of education.

⁵ P = Primary level.

⁶ S = Secondary level.

⁷ T = Tertiary level.

⁸ Interviewee’s preferred language.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Language</th>
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<td>Christian</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Chinese (P), Malay (S), and English (T)</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Salesman</td>
<td>Chinese (P and S)</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Abigail</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Chinese (P)</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Apple</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Chinese (P and S)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Aaron</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Manager</td>
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<tr>
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<td>David</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Salesman</td>
<td>Chinese (P), English (S)</td>
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<td>56</td>
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<td>Christian</td>
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<td>Chinese (P and S)</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
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<td>Benny</td>
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<td>Christian</td>
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<td>Chinese (P and S)</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Cynthia</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>F</td>
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Appendix 5: Snowballing Contact Web

The names in bold refer to persons who were the initial contact and the names in italic refer to persons who also participated as informants.

The subscript number followed after each name indicates the generations of Sarawakian-Chinese that they came from, for example, Nick comes from the second generation Sarawakian-Chinese.
The names in bold refer to persons who were the initial contact and the names in italic refer to persons who also participated as informants.

The subscript number followed after each name indicates the generations of Sarawakian-Chinese that they came from, for example, Nick comes from the second generation Sarawakian-Chinese.
## Appendix 6: Field Trip to China (An extract from the researcher’s field diary)

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<th>Descriptions</th>
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<td>9 October 2007</td>
<td>Forbidden City (The Gugong or the Imperial Palace), Tiananmen Square, Jiao Zhuang Hu Underground Tunnel, Silk Museum and Factory and Acrobatic Performance.</td>
<td>We arrived in the morning at 6am and we were welcomed by the tour guide. We were then taken to a restaurant for our breakfast. After breakfast we were taken to our hotel where we checked into our individual room. We started our first tour soon after. When we got off the coach, we were amongst many other tourists. We were also surrounded by hawkers and beggars and we were warned not to give any money away. We entered into the Forbidden City and we were given detail narration of the history of the emperors, the structure of each building. We were also given detail description of the ceremonies and events that were held here. We were then taken to the Jiao Zhuang Hu Underground Tunnel. The tour guide impressed upon us that it was built to protect the local people from the invasion of the Japanese armies. The idea of constructing the tunnel was attributed to Chairman Mao. The tour guide was giving much credit to the Chairman Mao for his ingenious creation and construction. We also visited the Silk museum and factory. We were told that silk was used by the emperors to keep them warm. (more...)</td>
<td>Tour group members were awed by the view they saw. Most people commented on the traffic on the road. Most people were surprised that there were not as many bicycles on the road as they thought. People were impressed with the number of cars on the road. One person commented on the number of Mercedes that he had seen on the road. People were also impressed with the high rise buildings and the highways and the flyovers. ‘China is really more advanced than we are’ one man remarked. ‘Look at the cars on the road and the road they built … they are so much better than us’. However, the tour group members were not too impressed with the beggars. The tourists seemed appalled by the beggars’ appearances. As one said, ‘we don’t have that many beggars at home. This is terrible. They are so dirty. I’m not surprise that they had to beg because there are so many people in China. But I can’t understand why they just can’t go home to the village and plant something. Everyone was impressed with the history, and with the tourist guide’s ability to tell the story. We were told of the five thousand year old history and the Forbidden City contains one of the oldest civilisations of the world.</td>
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# Appendix 7: Semi-structured interview sessions

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<td>Sylvia</td>
<td>Residence</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1/1/06</td>
<td>27/12/06</td>
<td>3:30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>Residence</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>3/1/06</td>
<td>22/12/06</td>
<td>5:00pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>Cafe</td>
<td>English, Hokkien*</td>
<td>5/1/06</td>
<td>22/12/06</td>
<td>5:30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Bobbie</td>
<td>Cafe</td>
<td>English, Mandarin, Hokkien*</td>
<td>7/8/05</td>
<td>4/2/08</td>
<td>12:30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Cafe</td>
<td>English, Hokkien*</td>
<td>15/12/06</td>
<td></td>
<td>12:30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Colin</td>
<td>Residence</td>
<td>English, Hokkien*</td>
<td>23/11/05</td>
<td></td>
<td>7:45pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Gerry</td>
<td>Office</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>19/12/06</td>
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<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Sandy</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>English, Hokkien*</td>
<td>21/12/06</td>
<td></td>
<td>6:00pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>English, Hokkien*</td>
<td>23/12/06</td>
<td>12noon</td>
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<tr>
<td>41</td>
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<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>English, Hokkien*</td>
<td>25/12/06</td>
<td>4:15pm</td>
<td>35 mins</td>
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<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Chin</td>
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<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>7/1/06</td>
<td>7:00pm</td>
<td>24 mins</td>
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<td>43</td>
<td>Bing</td>
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<tr>
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<td>30 mins</td>
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* indicates local dialect
A. Travel and Tourism

1. How often do you participate in non-working type of travelling?

I’ve only ever travelled three times to the UK. While I was growing up, I never thought of going anyway. I was too busy studying and later working to support my own family. I had to support my younger siblings after I finished school so ‘liyu’ was a luxury I couldn’t afford.

I’ve also been to China several times to visit my sister and also to tour China.

[Theme: Travel and tourism; ST: Barriers to tourism; SST: Family obligation]

Personal needs are subordinate to the needs of the group. It demonstrates a linkage between the individual and the family.

2. What motivates you to travel?

I have been to England several times to see my children. I wouldn’t have thought of visiting England otherwise. As a father, I have a duty towards my daughters. I am responsible for their education. Both of my children are studying in the UK. I save up my money to go and see them. While visiting my children, we would also travel to other tourist areas. I don’t go to their beaches or sit by their swimming pool. Instead we visited the museums and some other historical places to learn about other people’s culture.

As for China, my sister is there and I was born there. I would go to see her, my village and to tour China.

[Theme: Travel and tourism; ST: Familial-obligation; SST: VR tourism]
3. **What do you understand by tourism and do you participate in tourism?**

I don't have time to think about tourism. I work hard everyday so that I can earn enough money to look after my family and to make sure that my children will have a good education and my grandchildren will do well one day. As Chinese people say 'xian ku hou tian' (sweetness comes after bitterness). You work hard now, earn and save up now so that you can enjoy life later. The problem with the western people is that they don't think about their next generation. They spend on themselves first, earning their money and enjoy themselves travelling ... sitting by the beach sun bathing ... what a waste of time and money. They put their needs first. If I have that money, I would save it for the future.

*The re-conceptualisation of tourism is necessary to differentiate between ‘what is’ and ‘what is not’ the Chinese thing to do. Western culture is perceived to be more individualistic than the collective identity of the Sarawakian-Chinese.*

4. **Do you consider visiting relatives as part of your holiday plan?**

Of course. Maintaining relationship is very important. The problem I see in most young people including my own children is that they do not understand the importance of reciprocity. People kind to you, you must remember their kindness and pay back that kindness. I'm disappointed that my children do not see that as important. They do their own thing and they do not see the importance of visiting others who are kind to them.

*Maintaining familial connection is more important to the first generation than successive generations. The older generation saw themselves as members of a collective group.*

[Theme: Travel and tourism; ST: Maintaining familial relationships; SST: VR tourism]
B. Tourism Experiences in China

1. What motivated you to visit China?

I left my village when I was 10. We were landowners before but the government took our land away so we had to leave the country. My sister who is older was left behind. Since we were allowed to return to China, I have been to the village to see her. So my reason for going to China was to see her and to see the village. The village is not the same any more. They have more development and that included my sister’s house. They have good facilities and I think she has a good life.

My sister and my cousins are still there. Lots of my relatives are still there. The last time I went to see her, I had to bring money back. It cost me RM20,000 just to give away as donations. They were kind to us and when your relatives came to see us you have to give them ‘ang pow’ (red envelope that contains money) as gifts.

Since he was born in China, his connection to China was personal. He returned to his ancestral village to reconnect with his relatives but also to reconnect with his past.

[Theme: Motivation for visiting China; ST: VR; SST: Maintain connection]

2. Who did you go with?

I went with my wife.

3. Where did you go?

We went to Swatao and Hainan.

4. When did you go?

In 1997 after my retirement my friends begged me to go to Hainan with them. In 2005, I went to my village.

5. Would you go again?

Yes. I would go to visit my sister and also other places. There are lots of places that I have not been. China is a big country. It will take many trips before you could see everything.

I might not go to the village so soon because it cost so much money. People come to see you expecting something and if you do not have anything for them, you feel shame.
6. *Do you have relatives in China?*

   *My sister and my cousins still live in China.*

7. *Have you made extended visits to your/parents’ village in China for the purpose of sending your children to receive education in China or to arrange marriage for your children there?*

   No. My children are educated in Malaysia and after that I sent them to the UK to further their education. I never thought about arranging marriage for my daughters to Chinamen. One of my daughters married a Singaporean man. Others married Chinese from Malaysia.

8. *Do you own land/property or have any investment in China?*

   No.

   **No personal investment or continual interest of home village.**

9. *Do you regularly send money back to your family or relatives in China?*

   My parents used to send money and my uncle as well. My uncle who lives in Singapore, donated lots of money to help build up the village. They named a bridge after him. One of the reason I regularly visit my home village is to see how they have changed.

10. *How often do you visit your relatives (if any) in China?*

    Once to the village and once touring China.
C. Home

1. Where were you born?

I was born in Hainan in 1942. We settled in Betong when we arrived in Malaysia. Later we moved to Kuching. I left China at the age of 10 because the government at that time took away our land.

2. Do you still visit the place where you were born?

Yes, went to my village in 2005.

3. Where do you consider it a home (Sarawak or China or both)?

I live here (Kuching). I left China when I was a young boy. I have a family here and my home is here. I went back to China only to visit my sisters and to do some sightseeing.

Home is where the family is. The return journey is only for the purpose of visiting not settling or even eventual re-settling. Home is where family is and China is where they visit.

D. Identity

1. How similar or difference do you feel to the Chinese in China (language/culture/history/religion) in China?

We are Malaysian-Chinese. We are connected by blood.

Chinese identity is perceived to be universal and biological.

[Theme: Identity; ST: Chinese identity; SST: Inherent]

2. What does being Chinese mean to you?

China is developing fast. It is becoming one of the economic powers in the region. Even America is afraid of us Chinese. The dragon is awake. We will show the world what we are made of. Look at us, we have moved to all part of the world. Chinese can be found in every country. No matter how hard life is, we can make it.

Chinese achievements are translated as the achievements of all Chinese people. Therefore Chinese identity is universal and superior.
3. Do you think it is important for you and your children to visit China?

I stayed in a 5 star hotel and I hired a car to the village. I didn’t stay in the village. The houses in the village are not too bad. My sister’s house is air-conditioned. But I still like my comfort so I stayed in the hotel. My children had never visited China. I don’t think they like it. I don’t force them. They might visit China when they are older, I don’t know. I think it would be difficult for them because they can’t relate to them well. They were not born here and they live very different lives in Malaysia.

Like the village would be very different but if you go to the city, it is just … really good. I think my children would like the city better. I went to China I saw many Mercedes Benz cars on the road. We can move on really fast. Even like long time ago right, their buildings are quite good. They built this palace without using any nails and how they transported some of the building materials from one site to another … you are talking about a time when they don’t have cars … so then what about we are the first people to invent gun powder, and all other stuff… Chinese people are always very humble but our inventions were stolen by the western people so you think they are the ones invented all these. Now you know...

First generation is impressed with the progress in China.

[Theme: Visiting China; ST: Civilisation; SST: Modern/Traditional]

4. How important is it for you and your children to celebrate any Chinese events?

I used to celebrate Chinese New Year in a big way before I retired. I used to have a big open-house and invited all my friends to come. And I would cater food for three days. Now that I have retired, I don’t do that sort of thing anymore. I keep a low profile. Sometimes I would go away during this festive season so I don’t have to go through the hassle. My children are English-educated and they have lived overseas for several years now. They are probably very Western in their thinking. I’m not sure how much Chinese culture they observe overseas but when they come home, they have to behave like Chinese. As for me, I am a very typical Chinese person. I was born in China and I am very proud of being Chinese. As your father, I’m sure he tells you the same thing. We older people value our Chinese culture very much. Younger generations like you tend to be very Western in their thinking. We already taught about Chinese culture and now that you are older, we cannot force you to follow Chinese ways. Hopefully, my children will remember their Chinese cultures otherwise other people might think I have never taught them the Chinese proper way and I have not done my duty well as a father.

I don’t follow all the customs because now that I am a Christian, I don’t follow some of the rituals that are more Buddhist based.

5. How important is it for you and your children to know, maintain and visit their relatives in China?
I don’t think my children will be interested in visiting China or my village. It is important for me because my sister is still there.

6. How important is it for you and your children to know Chinese history and the history of China?

Chinese have five thousand years of history and we are very proud of our culture. It is what makes us Chinese. When I visited China, and they took us to these historical places like the palaces, the museums, it made me proud to be Chinese. We should be proud to have a long history like that. I’m not sure if my children know any of the Chinese history. I don’t think they learn that in school. It would be good if they know but I don’t think they are interested. I did when I was young.

**Chinese customs and festivals are closely associated with Chinese identity. However, identity is also subject to change when one is under Western influence.**

[Theme: Identity; ST: Sarawakian-Chinese identity; SST: Westernised]

7. How important is it for you and your children to be fluent in Mandarin and/or Chinese dialects?

I think all Chinese should be able to speak your own mother tongue. My children do not understand Mandarin because I sent them to English medium schools. I do think it is important to know your own language and I even sent them to private tuition but they were just not interested so they stopped going. I failed as a father for not insisting that my children learnt Mandarin. I came from China and at that time, I only knew Mandarin and because of that, I missed many opportunities in the job prospects because others knew English language better than I did. That was why I sent my children to English-medium school so they wouldn’t be in the disadvantage and they would have better chance in life. They are all grown now and they live overseas and they are doing very well without being fluent in Mandarin. They can understand a little and they can speak a little Mandarin.

**Chinese identity is to have or possess a history.**

8. Do you think that your religious background had any impact on your sense of Chinese identity?

I only converted to Christianity few years ago. It’s just I don’t do a lot of stuff like I did before like ancestor worship. I don’t go to the temple anymore.

9. What type of school did you attend? (Government/private/semi-government and Primary (English/Chinese/Malay), Secondary, Tertiary)

Chinese primary school then an English medium secondary school.
10. Are you a member of any Chinese clubs or associations?
   No

11. Do you subscribe to or regularly read Chinese newspapers produced in China or Malaysia?
   I read Chinese newspapers produced in Malaysia.

12. What tv programs do you watch? (Chinese, English and Malay (% of time spent watching): Chinese

13. Do you consider yourself to have a religious faith?
   Christian.

14. What language are you most fluent in? (show cards with 3 different languages)
   Mandarin but I can speak and understand English and Malay

E. Demographic Profile
1. Gender: M
2. Age: 65
3. Marital status: Married with no dependent children.

C. Time: 8 – 9 pm (04/09/05); 2:15 – 2:40 pm (12/11/05)
D. Location: café (public place)
An extract from a semi-structured interview transcribed from a tape-recording

(Second generation)

A. Travel and Tourism

1. How often do you participate in non-working type of traveling?

The first time I went away was after I got married and we went to Taiwan for our honeymoon. I traveled more after I got married. Then I took my mom to China then I went again but this time with my mother-in-law and my husband. We used to take our children to KL (Kuala Lumpur) during school holidays.

2. What motivates you to travel?

A chance to see my relatives, to relax, to learn about different cultures.

3. What do you understand by tourism and do you participate in tourism?

I traveled abit but not every year. I travelled to see my children mostly. When I travelled to other countries, I like to learn about their cultures, to try out their things and to see the scenery. I suppose that is relaxing. I don’t stay in the hotel and do nothing. We don’t sit by the pool or read our book. I can do that at home without having to go to other countries to do that. That would be a waste of money.

[Theme: Travel and tourism; ST: Acquiring knowledge; SST: Education]

4. Do you consider visiting relatives as part of your holiday plan?

I used to spend all my holidays just visiting my parents in the village. Even though I could afford the holiday, I just never thought about going away to see other places. I had to see my parents. Parents and family were our priority. It would seem so pu-li (no respect) if you don’t go back to see your parents and choose to go elsewhere. The first time I went away for a holiday was for my honeymoon. Now I see children planning their own holiday without going back to see their parents. It was so unthinkable for my generation.
Maintaining and sustaining familial relations are essential element of Chinese culture. Travelling seems more acceptable amongst the older generation post marriage. Travel is not acceptable without parental approval as a consequence of obligation to one’s parents and the desire not to upset them.

[Theme: Travel and tourism; ST: Barriers to tourism; SST: Familial obligation]

B. Tourism Experiences in China

1. What motivated you to visit China?

   I went the first time because I wanted to take my mom to her village. It is a privilege to your parents to the village. My dad passed away before I had the chance. Then the second-time I took my mother-in-law to China but we didn’t visit the village. We just toured China. She liked that too.

2. Who did you go with?

   The first time I went with my mom and husband and the second time with my husband and his mother.

3. Where did you go?

   We visited Beijing, Guiling and Shanghai. We also went to visit my mom’s village. We were treated like emperors there. Relatives and people living around the area heard that we were coming and they all came to see us. When we got to the village, we were welcomed with the display of fire-crackers. It felt like the whole village had come out from their dwellings to welcome us. We felt really important. Then we were ushered into a banquet hall where a feast was prepared for our arrival. Everyone followed us everywhere. And there was also presentations of the villagers various needs. We felt obligated to donate financially to the village. We felt like the rich and famous.

   
   Sarawakian-Chinese being overseas Chinese were held in high esteem when they return to their home village.

   [Theme: (Re)visiting ancestral village; ST: Familial obligation; SST: Filial piety]
4. When did you go?

5. Would you go again?

I would go again because there are more places I haven’t seen. There are lots of histories and I want to know and because I understand the language it is good. It’s good to know your own history and where you come from. If you know the histories then that help.

6. Do you have relatives in China?

Yes. My aunties and cousins.

7. Have you made extended visits to your/parents’ village in China for the purpose of sending your children to receive education in China or to arrange marriage for your children there?

No.

8. Do you own land/property or have any investment in China?

No.

9. Do you regularly send money back to your family or relatives in China?

No.

10. How often do you visit your relatives (if any) in China?

Only once with my mom.

C. Home

1. Where were you born?

Kapit, Sarawak

2. Do you still visit the place where you were born?

Yes because my sister is still there.
3. Where do you consider it a home (Sarawak or China or both)?

Sarawak, of course. I was born in. Even if I want to be in China, I don't think they would accept me. I don't think I can fit in. They are not the same as us here.

D. Identity

1. How similar or difference do you feel to the Chinese in China (language/culture/history/religion) in China?

We went to the Great Wall of China and we didn't get to the top. But the Chinese people there are very good in making money. They sell everything to you. Some of them followed you into your coach. It was very annoying and they were quite aggressive too. Chinese people in China are very aggressive when they sell and buy. If you are not careful, you get cheated all the time. I heard it so many times so we were very careful with our money.

Chinese in China are entrepreneurially aggressive; not as multilingual.

One other thing we are different is that we speak many different dialects and languages. They don't.. They thought we were really clever.

2. What does being Chinese mean to you?

We visited the temples and the palaces and the gardens, etc. all were used by the emperors. I thought it was amazing. I'm very proud of being Chinese. We have such rich history.

Being Chinese is to follow the traditional customs, respect the elderly, have good manners and care for your relations. I'm sure it's the same everywhere.

3. Do you think it is important for you and your children to visit China?

After visiting China, it makes you appreciate who you are as a Chinese person.

...I visited my mom's village when I went there with my mom. Since she passed away, I have not been. Instead I have visited other places in China. We do not maintain regular contact with our relatives-- probably once every few years. We know who they are and they know who we are. We just live separate lives. They have their families and we have ours. I think if you know where your village is then you should visit but if not visit China anyway because it is the ancestral homeland for all Chinese people whether you were born in China or outside China. By visiting China and your ancestral villages, you will be able to understand what China is like and learn about your own culture. I think my own children don't really understand Chinese culture very well because they are English-educated.
4. How important is it for you and your children to adhere to celebrate any Chinese events?

It is important to observe Chinese customs and festivals because we are Chinese. I think our Chinese culture is still the same for many years, even the same as the one practiced in China. But the problem is we do not follow strictly to everything because we have changed. Chinese people should celebrate Chinese New Year, Dragon-boat festival, Moon-cake festival, etc. These festivals are becoming more commercial nowadays but we should still observe these festivals. We may not necessarily observe all the details but at least others can see that we are celebrating the festivals and that should tell others that we are Chinese.

*Chinese culture is used to demarcate between those who are the same and those who are not. Chinese culture is also seen as fixed and universal.*

5. How important is it for you and your children to know, maintain and visit their relatives in China?

I have visited them before and might see them again. As for my children, they don’t know who they are. It wouldn’t mean anything to do.

6. How important is it for you and your children to know Chinese history and the history of China?

After I visited the Great Wall, it makes you feel great to be Chinese. Seeing how it was built, it makes you appreciates your heritage because you know Chinese people can achieve great things. My children are educated here so I don’t think they studied the same history as we did.
7. How important is it for you and your children to be fluent in Mandarin and/or Chinese dialects?

I think it is important that if you are Chinese you should know Mandarin. My children didn’t attend Chinese medium schools because my husband thought it would be too much pressured to study Mandarin. Mandarin is very difficult to study. My children are not too interested to study Mandarin either. But they do know how to write their Chinese name and they do understand Mandarin by learning the language through watching tv.

8. Do you think that your religious background had any impact on your sense of Chinese identity?

My parents are Christians and I don’t know when they became Christians, here or in China. I don’t know whether my relatives are Christians in China. I don’t think so. Because we are Christians, we do not follow some of the Chinese customs for example ancestor worship, we don’t worship our ancestors anymore. We are not superstitious as well.

The tour took us to the temple. We didn’t go inside because we are Christians. Some of the Buddhist tourists went in to pray. We didn’t feel pressure. When they didn’t see us participating they knew we were not Buddhists. Sometimes we don’t even want to visit such places. But under the circumstance we avoid going into the place. If we can avoid going into the place we would be wandering outside. We just feel awful with things like this. I didn’t participate in any of them because I don’t believe in it. My husband did and others who had coins with them would throw money as well.

9. What type of school did you attend? (Government/private/semi-government and Primary (English/Chinese/Malay), Secondary, Tertiary)

Chinese primary school then English secondary school.

10. Are you a member of any Chinese clubs or associations?

Yes.

11. Do you subscribe to or regularly read Chinese newspapers produced in China or Malaysia?

I read Chinese newspapers produced in Malaysia.

12. What tv programs do you watch? (Chinese, English and Malay (% of time spent watching): Chinese

13. Do you consider yourself to have a religious faith?

Christian.
14. What language are you most fluent in? (show cards with 3 different languages)
   Mandarin preferably but I can understand English as well.

E. Demographic Profile

1. Gender: F

2. Age: 52

3. Marital status: Married with one dependent child.


   A. Time: 11am – 12 noon (22/9/05); 4:00 – 4:25 pm (17/12/06)

   B. Location: residence
An extract from a semi-structured interview transcribed from a tape-recording

(Third generation)

A. Travel and Tourism

1. How often do you participate in non-working type of travelling?

We used to travel even when I was a child. My parents took us for holiday once every 3 years and we would also visit our grandparents every year so we have travelled. And when I was studying overseas, I travelled too. After I returned and started working, I didn’t travel because it is a bit strange to be travelling on your own here. And I travelled again after I got married. I travelled every year now.

Third generation travelled more extensively than the first and second generations. The collective identity of Chinese culture is typified by the character of the organization of travel, with group travel being dominant over individual.

2. What motivates you to travel?

To relax really – to do something different from work.

3. What do you understand by tourism and do you participate in tourism?

I like to do different things, like shopping, eating out, go to theme parks and do many things. I don’t like sitting around not doing anything. I do like to travel but I don’t think my parents like the thought of me traveling so much. They think it is a waste of money and that I should be saving up for my children. They are just old-fashion way of thinking. Old people don’t know how to enjoy themselves. My parents sacrificed so much for my studies in Australia. I worked during my holidays so I couldn’t afford to come back. I travelled a bit but I worked most of the time. After I returned from Australia, I got a job and worked to support my other sisters and to pay back the loan. No holiday for me until after I got married. My honeymoon was my first holiday since. Most of my friends are like me. If you can afford to take a holiday away from home then you must be really rich and very ang-mo (western) type!

She describes doing activities away from her normal environment as ‘relaxing’. Relaxation involves actively engaging in activities that were non-work related and yet not passive.
4. Do you consider visiting relatives as part of your holiday plan?

By not visiting them, I am not being rude. My relatives probably know more about my parents than they do about me. If you visit them, you have to bring lots of gifts and presents and money. I don’t like it because when my parents know where I’m going then they start ringing up their relatives and by then you will have to stay with them and do what they want to do, etc. It’s the cultural thing…and if you don’t visit them, you come home and your parents think you don’t give them face

The emphasis on familial ties is not as strong nor is the obligation to visit relatives in other countries.

B. Tourism Experiences in China

1. What motivated you to visit China?

Mom had talked about going to China before and so when I and my husband could afford it, we went together with mom. This is the best way to honour my parent because she looked after my children when I’m at work. Really, this is the best way to repay your parents. Any Chinese would want to take their parents to China. (Have you considered taking them to other countries instead?) I don’t think they would enjoy other countries because China is the ancestral homeland and also they would be able to understand the language and the history.

Taking parents to China is one way of honouring them.

[Theme: Visiting ancestral homeland; ST: Familial obligation; SST: honour]

2. Who did you go with?

I won’t go to China by myself. I would much rather join a tour group or at least know a friend or a relative in China. I heard so many stories of people being cheated of their money and all sort of bad stuff so I won’t go there on my own. It doesn’t feel safe. Even if they know you are Chinese, they will still rip you off. It doesn’t matter if you are Chinese or not, you are a foreigner. China is not a tourist-friendly place.

It would also be helpful if you can go with someone who is fluent in Chinese. My Chinese is not too bad but sometimes I struggle still so I can imagine if you do not understand Mandarin, it would be very difficult.

Independent travel is not quite encouraged and neither was it common. Travelling collectively also reinforced by a need for safety as China is perceived as ‘unsafe’ territory. Being a Sarawakian-Chinese, she saw herself as a foreigner in China.
3. Where did you go?

Shanghai, Suzhou, Nanqing, Wuxi, Beijing.

4. When did you go?

1997

5. Would you go again?

Yes, I want to visit some of the places like Terracotta, Tiananmen Square, etc lots of other places.

China means more to the first and second generations. The importance of China as a focal point for identity formation is less significant in the third generation.

China holds little association for her, treating China as just another tourist destination. Touried famous tourist landmarks but never been to their ancestral village.

6. Do you have relatives in China?

Yes but I don't know them. I'm not even sure exactly where the village is.

7. Have you made extended visits to your/parents' village in China for the purpose of sending your children to receive education in China or to arrange marriage for your children there?

No.

I have never been to my grandparents' village. My parents went there few years ago. I've only visited the tourist sites in Beijing and Shanghai. I don't see the point of going to the village. It means more to my grandparents and parents but not to me. They think China is great and Chinese people should go there but I have been to China, it doesn't make you any more or less Chinese. Well, now that I have been to China, at least I can tell others that I have been to the Great Wall.

8. Do you own land/property or have any investment in China?

No.

9. Do you regularly send money back to your family or relatives in China?
Never.

*No personal investment or continual interest of home village.*

10. *How often do you visit your relatives (if any) in China?*

Never. Not intend to either. I don’t know them.

C. Home

1. *Where were you born?*

   Kuching, Sarawak

   *Home is where she was born.*

2. *Do you still visit the place where you were born?*

   I still live here.

3. *Where do you consider it a home (Sarawak or China or both)?*

   I wouldn’t want to grow up in China. Kuching is my home. I have no sentiments towards China or any attachment towards China. It is just another country to me. I go to China and I come back. It’s a tourist destination like Australia, or England.

D. Identity

1. *How similar or difference do you feel to the Chinese in China (language/culture/history/religion) in China?*

   They have lots of bicycles on the road. They also have lots of roads, flyovers, etc on the road. In some places they are so modern but in places they are so backward.

   Their public toilets are really terrible. I hated going to the toilets. They are so dirty. I am familiar with Chinese culture and when I visited China, I found them (Chinese in China) to be rough and loud. They spit and we just don’t do any of such things. I think our way of life is influenced by western thinking and western education and so that have made us more refined.

2. *What does being Chinese mean to you?*

   Yellow skin colour.
3. Do you think it is important for you and your children to visit China?

It’s just another destination to go to and it is cheaper than most other places and it is not that far. It’s up to my children if they want to travel to China.

4. How important is it for you and your children to adhere to celebrate any Chinese events?

I do celebrate Chinese New Year. My husband likes to. I prefer to go away. Again it feels like unity also for all Chinese to celebrate the occasion.

Our Chinese culture here is very liberal now. We are westernized. We are more open-minded.

5. How important is it for you and your children to know, maintain and visit their relatives in China?

I have never been to the village but I have been to other places in China. I don’t want to go to the village. I heard it is dirty. Further I don’t know where the village is and I don’t have anymore relatives living there. I have been to other tourist sites and I think that is equally good.

6. How important is it for you and your children to know Chinese history and the history of China?

The history was great – I mean I didn’t realize it at the time how much history they have. The history of the Great Wall was enough. The unpleasant bit was people kept selling you things and they could even print out a certificate for you for being at certain point. It made the experience uncomfortable.

We also went to several tourist sites like the palaces. Everything was very Chinesey.

I didn’t know a lot about Chinese history until I visited China. We went to visit several places and we were told of the Chinese histories and I was amazed and very overwhelmed. I didn’t know we have so much history. Don’t ask me about what the tour guide said. I can’t remember anything. Even though I attended Chinese school last time, I didn’t even know about so many things. Quite amazing really. Some of the palaces, monuments, etc I don’t see any significance because I have never heard of the names before. I think being Malaysian we are very localized and we have lost our roots. Perhaps the older generation may have some ties with China and appreciate the history more but our generation we just don’t.
7. How important is it for you and your children to be fluent in Mandarin and/or Chinese dialects?

Yes and that is why I send my children to Chinese schools. Only so they can do well in the society. At the same time, they also know other languages.

8. Do you think that your religious background had any impact on your sense of Chinese identity?

No. I think my ancestors were idol worshippers.

When we were visiting China, we visited several places of worship and after awhile all temples looked alike to me. They were all painted red, images of dragons and phoenixes carved on the wall and massive altars with burning incense, etc...It didn't mean anything to me personally. It might mean something more sacred to the Buddhists. It is not that it is not sacred – it’s just do nothing for me. But I thought Dr Sun’s Memorial Hall was a sacred site for me. It felt different. He was a Christian so I thought the place was rather sacred.

9. What type of school did you attend? (Government/private/semi-government and Primary (English/Chinese/Malay), Secondary, Tertiary)

Chinese primary school, Malay secondary mission (semi-government ) and English university

10. Are you a member of any Chinese clubs or associations?

No

11. Do you subscribe to or regularly read Chinese newspapers produced in China or Malaysia?

I don’t read Chinese newspapers.

12. What tv programs do you watch? (Chinese, English and Malay (% of time spent watching):

English

13. Do you consider yourself to have a religious faith?

Christian

14. What language are you most fluent in? (show cards with 3 different languages)

I can do all three but I prefer English
E. Demographic Profile

1. Gender: F

2. Age: 36

3. Marital status: Married with two dependent children

4. Employment: Bank Manager

E. Time: 16:45-17:30pm (2/9/05); 21:15-21:45 pm (10/11/05)

F. Location: Amanda’s residence
Appendix 11: The itinerary of the tour included the following:

- 1st day: Arriving in China.
- 2nd day: Forbidden City (The Gugong or the Imperial Palace), Tiananmen Square, Jiao Zhuang Hu Underground Tunnel, Silk Museum and Factory and Acrobatic Performance.
- 4th day: Summer Palace, Pearl Factory, Beijing Zoo, Tea House, Tricycle Ride through Hutong, Heavenly Garden, Ming’s Tomb.
- 5th day: Tianjin ancient cultural and food street, Corner Tower of Beijing City.
- 6th and 7th day: Chengde: Summer Resort, Potala Temple.
- 8th day: Shopping in Beijing.
- 9th day: Return to Sarawak.
APPENDIX 12: PHOTOGRAPHS

As was discussed in Section 5.5.3, the use of images such as photographs is used in this research to prompt the memory of the respondents and subsequently to elicit information from them. This technique was incorporated into the semi-structured interview as part of the research method used to collect data for this research. In other words, the photographs were used by the respondents to ‘assist’ them in the semi-structured interviews. The following photographs are kindly contributed by the respondents of this research.

Photo 1. A photograph of a Sarawakian-Chinese tour group at the Great Wall of China.
Photo 2. A photo showing a respondent with her mother posing at the entrance of the Forbidden City. Taking her mother to China was an act of filial piety.

Photo 3. One of the respondent posing at the Great Wall of China.
Photo 4. A photo showing a scene of family reunion. Sarawakian-Chinese were often treated to a feast when they returned to their ancestral village.

Photo 5. A photo taken by a Sarawakian-Chinese respondent while touring Beijing city. The respondent was impressed with the high-rise buildings in the city.
Photo 6. A photo showing a Sarawakian-Chinese meeting a Chinese man. The elderly Chinese man reminded the Sarawakian-Chinese man of his father.

Photo 7. A photo showing the Potala temple in Chende. The rest of the tour group had entered the temple to pray while the rest of the group who were not Buddhist stayed outside the temple.
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