

Language, Ethnicity, and Belonging for the Children of Migrants in New Zealand

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Abstract

The children of migrants grow up with influence from at least two cultures, and they must negotiate their path to adulthood through one or more ethnicities and one or more language varieties that may set them apart from the majority population. We asked how teenagers born to migrant parents in an English-speaking context appeal to the cultures and/or ethnicities they identify with to explain their language choices and perceptions of belonging. More than 50 interviews were carried out with teenagers who identified as speakers of the minority language of their parents (Chinese, Dutch, French, German, Korean, or Spanish), and one or both parents of such young people. The focus of the interviews was the minority language, but they became narratives of belonging. Thematic analysis of the transcribed and (where necessary) translated interviews revealed patterns in the perceptions of the teens and their parents. The reported self-perceived proficiency of the teenagers in the minority language, their perception of their ethnicity (particularly but not exclusively for the Chinese and Korean teens) and the culture of the host country, diasporic, and home country communities—were factors in when and how the teens chose to use the minority language, and in how they identified as, for example, Dutch. More than 160 languages are spoken in New Zealand; 25% of the population was born elsewhere, yet the country is one of the most monolingual in the world. This study reveals tensions affecting the willingness of New Zealand-born young people to openly identify with their parents' ethnicity and to use their languages. Lessons learned from those who raised bilingual children in New Zealand in the face of minimal official support and overwhelming pressure from English will be valuable to other parents and caregivers in New Zealand and elsewhere.

Keywords

bilingualism, identity, culture, ethnicity, liminality, belonging

Introduction

Due to its remote location, New Zealand was the last major landmass to be populated by humans. About 1,000 years ago, Polynesian voyagers sailed to Aotearoa New Zealand and gradually spread throughout the country. European migrants started arriving in numbers after 1840. These settlers were originally mostly from Britain and Ireland; in the 1945 Census, 94% of non-Māori New Zealanders were of British descent but that has changed rapidly since the 1960s. Along with migrants from Britain, there have been migrants from many countries, particularly China (from the 1860s) and Polynesian islands (mostly from the 1950s).

More recently, New Zealand has been described as super-diverse (Royal Society of New Zealand, 2013), with more than 160 languages being spoken, or, perhaps more accurately, having speakers normally resident in the country (Statistics New Zealand, 2014), and yet the country is one of the most monolingual in the world (Starks, Harlow, & Bell, 2005). In the 2013 Census, a quarter of the population (25.2%) were born overseas; in the largest city, Auckland,

that figure was 39.2%. In Canterbury, the second largest region by population, less than 20% of the population was born overseas (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). This study aims to describe and attempt to explain some of the characteristics of families living in Christchurch, the largest city in Canterbury, where one or both parents was a foreign-born speaker of a language other than English and where the New Zealand-born children in the family had grown up able to speak that language. We are particularly interested in how young, New Zealand-born speakers of minority languages look back on linguistic aspects in their childhood.

More than 11% of people living in New Zealand in 2013 indicated Asian ethnicity in the 2013 Census. The Census defines *Asian* broadly, encompassing, for example, Chinese,

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Indian, and even Fijian Indians. Respondents select the ethnic group or groups they identify as belonging to from a list and can add others. In Auckland, one in four identify with one or more Asian ethnicities, but in some pockets of Auckland, the self-identified Asian population is more than 70%, compared with the densest areas for Asian New Zealanders in Wellington (39.5%) and Christchurch (32.1%). The Asian population of New Zealand is increasing (6.3% of the population in 2006, 8.8% in 2006%, and 11.1% in 2013), and it is augmented by teenagers who come as international students sent to study at high school or university. Although Asians have been in New Zealand since before the widespread settlement of Europeans (Spoonley, 2015), just 22% of those identifying as Asian were born in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). Those identifying as Chinese and Indian each comprise about a third of the Asian population of New Zealand, followed by Filipino and Korean. The Chinese diaspora in New Zealand is particularly interesting, as it spans many generations with successive waves of migrants from the second half of the 19th century to the post-1980 migration (which followed from the introduction of immigration rules which did not discriminate against non-European ethnicities; Bromell, 2008).

Acculturation, Assimilation, and Multiculturalism

New Zealand has long been concerned with the acculturation of migrants to their new environment. Bedford (2003) accounts for changes in the New Zealand immigration policy in the 1980s, no longer discriminating on grounds of source country, yet still selecting migrants with good levels of education and a good command of English. For migrants who arrive with limited English language proficiency (increasingly rare due to immigration requirements for large groups of migrants to demonstrate high levels of English [IELTS 6.5] to be allowed in at all), language development through formal or informal language learning is a priority. There is huge pressure for migrants to gain English language skills, even if they abandon their home language in the process (King & Cunningham, 2016; Office of Ethnic Affairs, 2013). The Office of Ethnic Affairs produced a report in 2013, emphasizing the importance of migrants acquiring English, even if it meant they used their home language less and even that they should consider speaking English at home, so their children would not acquire the heritage language. Zhou (2001) mentions two changes that denote acculturation: Immigrants or their descendants abandoning their language in favor of the majority language, and identifying themselves as belonging to both the old and the new culture or dropping the home country link and identifying as belonging only to the new country. Espiritu and Wolf (2001), however, demonstrate that this need not be the case, at least in the case of Filipino migrants to the United States, as they found their informants maintained a strong Filipino and Filipino American identity while at the same time conforming to the forces of acculturation and

assimilation. They relate this partly to Asians being “inassimilable” in mainstream American society because of the “enduring significance of race” (Espiritu & Wolf 2001, p. 171).

The positioning of migrants as outsiders has been the subject of much research, perhaps since the seminal and much cited work of Park (1928) and Stonequist (1935, 1937) who presented the concept of *marginal man* which Park defined as a person, a migrant who is,

living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples, never quite willing to break, even if he [*sic*] were permitted to do so, with his past and his traditions, and not quite accepted, because of racial prejudice, in the new society in which he [*sic*] now seeks to find a place. (p. 892)

The children of migrants, on the contrary, are not necessarily expected or expecting to find themselves marginalized. They have not themselves migrated, and the majority language will usually be their strongest language and the language of most or all of their formal education. Those who speak a minority language are raised with influences from both minority and majority cultures and from multiple languages, and may identify more or less strongly with multiple ethnicities. Yet, much research has shown that these children of migrants may struggle to belong to either the majority cultures or their parents’ cultures. Linguistically, Fishman (1999) tells us that language shift will generally be complete within two generations, so while the children of migrants may have some knowledge of the heritage language, their grandchildren will not. Their only language will be the majority language, which will impact their membership of any ethnolinguistic community. In the case of not speaking Chinese in a diasporic context, this is explored thoughtfully by Ang (2001) and confirmed by Li (2016) who mentions that overseas Chinese have “tended to privilege the learning of local languages by their children as the priority” (p. 8).

Children of migrants who are born and educated in the settlement country usually expect to become part of the mainstream, possibly with a *hyphenated* (e.g., Korean New Zealander) identity. This will be somewhat different in contexts like Australia where, despite the existence of indigenous Aborigines, multiculturalism is the policy and the formation of ethnolinguistic migrant communities is, to an extent, supported (Castles, 2000). New Zealand has a bicultural agenda (Bromell, 2008; Ghosh, 2015; May, 2002) focusing on the rights of the indigenous Māori people as regulated by the Treaty of Waitangi (Waitangi Tribunal, 1986, as cited by May, 2002). In addition, migrants to New Zealand have traditionally come mainly as a fairly homogeneous migrant group from the British Isles (Spoonley, 2015). These two factors mean that assimilating as part of the mainstream will be easier for those whose appearance allows them to pass as a member of the Anglo-Celtic majority and potentially more difficult for others, those termed “visible immigrants” by Spoonley (2015, p. 53).

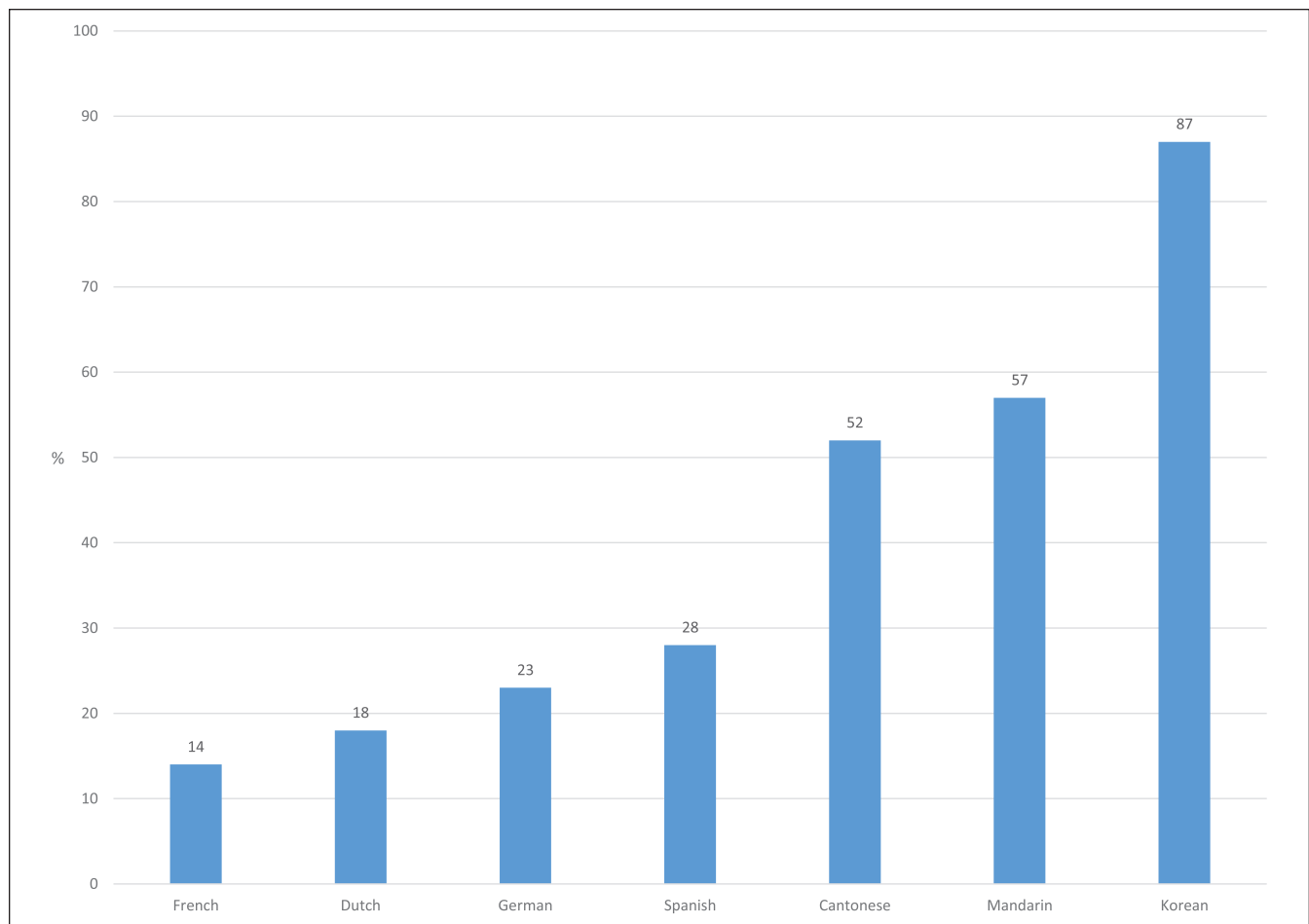


Figure 1. Percentage of New Zealand-born teenagers who speak a language other than English which at least one parent speaks.

Writing about the Australian position, Castles (2016) finds a disconnect between policies which have, since the 1970s, promoted multiculturalism rather than assimilation but still maintain an expectation that migrants will settle and adopt Australian identity. In fact, the current trend is also one of circular migration and transnational identity. Castles (2016) explains that transnational migration has become more complex with some migrants wanting to settle permanently and others planning to stay just a few years. Even this distinction between settlers and sojourners is not stable, as plans change, and the children of migrants may wish to settle or sojourn in the land their parents left. This transnational mobility may result in their having “flexible and multi-layered identities” (Castles, 2016, p. 397) and feeling they belong in more than one context. Leibkind (1999) echoes this sentiment, pointing out that some members of ethnolinguistic minorities may choose to speak the dominant language and identify with its speakers.

However, Dahinden (2012) warns against ignoring criteria for identity and belonging other than ethnicity or nationality or perhaps religion. She challenges the drive of multicultural or pluralist models to recognize and value

cultural minorities and further questions what she describes as an assumption that migrant adaptation or acculturation or the lack thereof is due to *community*, *ethnic group*, or *culture* rather than to class, professional, or other characteristics.

The Current Study

The 5-yearly New Zealand Census has just one question about language: “In which language(s) could you have a conversation about a lot of everyday things?” An analysis of commissioned Census data from the 2013 census (Figure 1) shows that the rate of intergenerational transmission of the minority languages with the most speakers varies greatly, from 14% of New Zealand-born teenagers (13–18 years old) with at least one parent who speaks French reporting that they can speak French to 87% of New Zealand-born Korean teens being able to speak Korean.

Since Chinese (Mandarin), French, Spanish, and German are taught as optional foreign languages in schools (Ministry of Education, Education Counts, 2018), we were careful to include only young people who had at least one parent who had indicated in the Census that they spoke the language in

Table 1. Participant Distribution.

Language	Young people	Parents
Chinese	C1 daughter	C1 mother
		C2 mother
	C3 daughter	C3 mother
	C4 son	C4 mother
		C5 mother
		C6 mother
		C7 mother
Dutch	D1 daughter-a, D1 daughter-b	D1 mother, D1 father
	D2 daughter	D2 mother
	D3 daughter	D3 mother
	D4 son	D4 mother
French	F1 daughter	F1 mother
	F2 daughter	F2 mother
	F3 child-a-c	F3 father
		F4 mother
		F5 father
German	G1 son-a, G1 son-b	G1 father
	G2 son, G2 daughter	G2 father, G2 mother
		G3 father, G3 mother
	G4 son	G4 father
		G5 mother
Korean	K1 son	K1 mother
	K2 daughter	K2 mother
	K3 son	K3 mother
	K4 daughter	
	K5 son	K5 mother
	K6 son	K6 mother
	K7 daughter	
	K8 daughter	
Spanish	S1 daughter-a/S1 daughter-b	S1 mother
	S2 daughter-a/S2 daughter-b	S2 mother

question. The reasons for this were investigated in a qualitative study of the self-reported experiences of New Zealand-born young adults (16 years and above) who had been identified through snowball sampling as speaking their heritage language, that is, a language other than English shared by at least one parent who was not born in New Zealand. Our intention was to identify characteristics of these families, their situations, and their practices that led to the outcome that the children grew up identifying as speakers of the minority language, and to ask what it means to be a young, New Zealand-born speaker of these minority languages in New Zealand.

Method

We recruited research assistants who were fluent in Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), Korean, French, Spanish, German, and Dutch and trained them to carry out a series of interviews about growing up with two languages in New

Zealand with New Zealand-born young people between 16 and 22 years old. We also spoke to parents of young people in this age group. There were a total of 51 interviews, 23 with young people and 28 with parents. These involved a total of 30 young people (siblings in families D1, F3, G1, G2, S1, and S2 participated together in a single interview) and 31 parents (in families D1, G2, and G3, both parents were interviewed together). Table 1 shows the distribution of languages and participants. The participants were recruited through snowball sampling where one participant recruits another to the study. The young people were all born in New Zealand to parents who had themselves migrated to New Zealand, and were older than 16 years of age at the time of recording. In some cases, the young people and parents do not match, so that some parents are included without their teenage children, and some young people are included without their parents. All the young people, including those whose parents were interviewed without them, reported being able to speak their parents' languages.

Interviews

A basic set of questions was given to the research assistants during their training, but they were free to deviate from the order of questions and to ask follow-up questions. The questions for parents were about their experience as a speaker of a minority language in New Zealand, about their decision to raise child as speaker of community language in New Zealand and how they think it went, about their child as a speaker of the minority language and of English, whether they had any advice for new parents, and why they thought other families had not raised bilingual children. The questions for the young people were similar, covering their experience being raised as a speaker of a language other than English or Māori in New Zealand, how much and how well they feel they use the minority language, their schooling and whether speaking their minority language has affected their schooling, advice for new parents, and why they think not all young people who have a parent who speaks a minority language end up being able to use that language. The interviewers were asked to keep their questions as open as possible, and while telling enough about their own background and experiences in New Zealand to establish their credibility as sharing the language background of the participants, they were asked to leave most of the conversational space to the participants.

The interviews were carried out in semipublic settings where possible, but sometimes the interviewees asked the interviewer to come to their home, and this was then done. Efforts were made to interview the young people and their parents one by one, so each would feel free to speak, but generally, the parents were asked to stay within sight, but a little away so they did not hear the conversation. Sometimes, however, the parents asked to stay, and wanted to be interviewed together, and they were accommodated in this. The

interviews were between 15 min and 2 hr in duration, as the research assistants accommodated the participants' linguistic preferences and, in some cases, joy at being able to speak their own language. The participants were given the choice of whether to be interviewed in the minority language or English, and typically, the young people preferred English or used mostly English (58%) while the adults preferred the minority language, with the exception of one Spanish-speaking parent who used both languages.

The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed into the language of the interview. When not in English, the transcripts were translated, usually by the research assistant who carried out the interviews.

Analysis

NVivo software was used as an aid in the coding and interpretation of the interview data. All the participants were given anonymizing labels (as can be seen in Table 1) such that the languages Chinese, Dutch, French, German, Korean, and Spanish were abbreviated as C, D, F, G, K, and S, respectively; each family was given a number and the participant was denoted, for example, *mother* or *daughter-a* resulting in participant labels such as *C2mother* for the mother in Chinese Family 2. The transcripts were coded for speaker and interviewer and then read and reread several times. The emergent patterns were noted in NVivo as nodes, and the transcripts were coded to six nodes: *beliefs*, *community*, *identity*, *mother*, *practices*, and *proficiency*. From this coded material, the broad themes of *language*, *culture*, and *ethnicity* emerged. The following sections exemplify these themes with material from the interviews.

Language

Language and language practices were at the heart of the interviews, and some of the most interesting aspects of the interviews fall into this theme. Several facets of the participants' beliefs and practices surrounding language were distinguished, concerning language choices and feelings about language proficiency reported by both parents and young people. Each of these will be exemplified with excerpts from the interview data and discussed.

Language Choices

Meeting expectations. Young people growing up in New Zealand in a family where one or more language other than English is spoken will often find themselves up against the expectations of others. First, their parents will have made their expectations of the children's language choices in different situations clear during their early childhood.

I am German. It's a part of me. A part of my culture and their grandparents speak German. Therefore the kids have to learn German and the grandparents English. (G4father)

The young people in the current study were teenagers, and not always under the supervision of their parents. Even if they used a minority language when they were small, these young people's language practices both inside and outside the home are made fairly independently. Their parents, however, may be heavily invested in their children's continued language development in the home language, as can be seen in these excerpts from interviews with two Chinese mothers who are concerned about their New Zealand-born children being despised by New Zealanders and rejected by Chinese people if they are not able to speak their heritage language.

You do not know how difficult it is for Chinese children if they cannot speak Chinese. They will feel confused about their identify and they won't be accepted by the local people or Chinese people if they do not inherit our language and culture. (C1mother)

I have met some people who are the second or third generation of Chinese, but they can only speak English rather than Chinese. Every time when I met those kind of people and looked at their face, and listened to them to introduce their hometown (like somewhere in China), I felt really sad and regretful for them. (C3mother)

The notion of New Zealand-born teens feeling they have a hometown in another country, of being "from" a country they may never have visited, is reflected in the interviews with this Korean girl:

If I look at myself in the mirror I'd be Asian and then if I wasn't able to speak my own language I'd be like "what?" I'm from this place but I don't even know how to speak it and I'd feel quite disrespectful in a way as well. Like just to my own country the fact that I can't speak it. So there's a bit of like an identity crisis where you kind of doubt yourself in a way. Should I just stick to like having that white personality or like that white upbringing or should I try and have the relationship to the other country I belong to? (K2daughter)

Other Asian teens speak about the expectation from family and community members that they will be able to speak the minority language:

I think it was just assumed that as a Korean you've got to know Korean and I think we've all come across this a lot. If you're a Korean you have to know Korean. Or else you're some sort of a failed Korean. (K3son)

[My parents] said I am Chinese and I should know how to speak Chinese. (C4son)

This expectation also comes from the teenagers' peers at school, as expressed by *G1son* whose mother is Japanese and his father Swiss.

A lot of them don't know that I can speak Japanese and German. When they ask where I am from I say Japan and Switzerland.

But they keep forgetting Switzerland, because I look a bit Asian. But they remember the Japanese because of the way I look. (G1son-a)

G1son, who was born in New Zealand, identifies as being “from” Japan and Switzerland, the points of origin of his parents.

Resistance and willingness. Many children being raised with two languages will go through phases of not wanting to use the minority language, or of answering their parents in the majority language. This has been well documented (Baker & Wright, 2017; Cunningham, 2011; De Houwer, 2015), and children’s reluctance to use the minority language may even lead to families abandoning the minority language altogether, especially when only one parent speaks that language with the children.

The oldest boy told his father: “You’ve got a bad voice for Dutch Dad!” And he was not allowed to speak Dutch any longer. (D3mother)

If this happens, it is difficult to repair, though it can be turned round if the parents both are speakers of the same minority language and are able to persist in the use of the minority language at home. Teens who have not acquired proficiency in their heritage language may go to great lengths to repair that:

When he was a little boy, he was reluctant to learn Chinese, he kind of rebelled, you know. However, now he is positive and motivated to learn it . . . When he has spare time, he goes online to search for Chinese materials, and finishes his Chinese homework without my reminder. Last time, he told me that he may choose Chinese as a subject [for national school exams]. (C4mother)

I came to realise that I need to learn Korean. Even though you try to refuse [to learn your heritage language and culture] there comes the time to realise who you are. So you feel the need to learn Korean and you naturally start learning. (K1son)

Language Proficiency

Interestingly, the young people who were raised speaking a European language (other than English) were more critical of their level of proficiency than those who were raised speaking an Asian language.

I feel good speaking Spanish when I am in front of people who can’t speak Spanish but when I am speaking with people who Spanish is their first language, like mum, or when I go to Spain, sometimes my friends laugh at things I say and that is embarrassing because they are perfect and I am just ok but when I am in front of people who can’t speak Spanish that’s better. (S1daughter-a)

I can understand most French but I don’t like to talk unless I can say it right and so that kind of puts me off speaking to people. (F2daughter)

This self-critical stance may be due to the existence of Chinese and Korean ethnolinguistic communities in Christchurch, often based around churches, whereas non-English European languages have fewer speakers in New Zealand and they stay in New Zealand for shorter periods. There will generally be fewer opportunities for New Zealand-born teenagers to speak French, German, or Spanish outside the home, while the Asian teens have regular opportunities to use their home language with community members, some of whom may be critical of the level achieved by these diasporic speakers.

At the same time, the Asian teens, given the expectations of their parents, their communities, and the wider society in both New Zealand and the country their parents migrated from, may be embarrassed or ashamed at not speaking their heritage language well:

I was embarrassed of myself not speaking Korean and jealous of [other Korean students]. And those two feelings led me to learn Korean. I worked hard. (K1son)

I can formulate sentences, but it’s broken, like broken Chinese. (C2son)

Culture

Parents who have themselves migrated to New Zealand together as a couple, bring with them an intact way of life, in which the New Zealand-born children are raised. Parents are often quite aware of concessions they make to smooth their children’s path:

My family hasn’t practised a strict way of Korean culture. Because we have lived here for a long time and my children were born here. We have lived with mixed cultures. But because the two cultures were very different children needed to accept two cultures at the same time. If they didn’t accept these two cultures they would become confused and lose self-esteem. (K3mother)

I suggest that if parents want their children to be accepted by society, they have to pass on Chinese culture to their children, and meanwhile let the children know English culture. Without doing this, their children become a “banana man” and have identity crisis. (C1mother)

The term *banana man* is a translation of a Cantonese expression (yellow on the outside, white on the inside) and refers to an ethnically Chinese person oriented to Western values who may or may not speak a Chinese language (Khoo, 2016).

My French friend brought her children up as Kiwis . . . I didn't do French French, it was something between the two. I didn't abandon French, but I didn't make the effort. So the results are also somewhat in between. (F1mother)

The teenagers we interviewed were conscious of differences between New Zealand and other cultures, and often felt strongly about these differences, talking about them as stereotypical characteristics that they can choose to adopt or not:

I am glad, I am really glad that I have Spanish in me because we are warm people. We are very easy to be friends with because we want to know everyone and we want to talk to everyone and we want to hug everyone and to share. (S1daughter-b)

I identify as more Mexican, because I like the culture way more than I like Kiwi culture. (S2daughter-a)

Others talk about knowledge of the culture of the country of origin in terms of continuing transnational connection, enabling mobility so that the children of migrants can aspire to visit or relocate to the place their parents left.

Yes, because now it is my culture too, and my history. Family history. Yes, I have more connection with my Dutch family than with my New Zealand family. (D3daughter)

I am happy to live here as a bilingual speaker of both Korean and English. I am a citizen of New Zealand who was born here, I like Korea and love Korean culture as well as Kiwi culture. (K1son)

May (2002) problematizes the notion of culture as something nostalgic for migrants to look back on rather than a living culture that can continue to develop outside of its original context. The broken link to the point of origin is central to belonging to a minority culture. This diasporic culture is associated to the original migrants' point of origin and also free to develop in new directions.

Narratives of Belonging

Large parts of many of our interviews dwelled on the participants' feelings of belonging or not belonging in New Zealand, as is touched on in many of the excerpts presented above. The interviews themselves contain *narratives of belonging* (Anthias, 2002; Heyd, 2016; Hughey, 2012). Some of these are racialized and express the shared experience of others with Asian backgrounds, and knowledge of an Asian language, regardless of which Asian country their parents migrated from:

So I seem to connect better with other bilingual Asians so it kind of affects my social circle of friends. A lot of white people don't understand the issues that Asian people go through. (K2daughter)

Others comment on the disconnect between their appearance and their actual cultural competence:

It's just surprising the fact that I look so Asian and yet I'm like a person who's grown up here. (K2daughter)

One Chinese mother defends the self-perception as New Zealander of her New Zealand-born daughter (whose father is Egyptian) with reference to her citizenship:

To her, she is New Zealander. No matter what complexion you are, as long as you were born here, your passport will show that you are New Zealander, and definitely she believes she is a New Zealander. (C3mother)

She spoke further about her daughter's experiences of not meeting the expectations of the authorities, even in form filling:

When she filled the form or this kind of thing, she asked "Mum, which group do I belong to?" She doesn't belong to Chinese group, nor European group or Islanders. Every time, I told her to choose by herself. (C3mother)

Other participants speak of the difficulty they have making what feels like a binary choice between belonging to one or other of their ethnicities:

I feel more Dutch than New Zealander. (D3daughter)

My son said, "I do not want to be French, I want to be English." (F1mother)

Of course, many contemporary documents, such as the New Zealand Census forms, allow the selection of multiple ethnicities. Some of the participants talk of hybrid or *hyphenated* identities, which may be particularly useful for visible minorities to express their belonging to more than one national, racial, and ethnic identity (Somerville, 2008):

Because the question is, I'm ethnically Korean but my nationality is New Zealand. What am I? I think a lot of us went through an identity crisis to a certain degree and . . . while you get the best of those both things you never fully belong to any set because you can't completely integrate into the Korean community but you can't completely become a part of the New Zealand people simply because you look Asian you know. So yeah so we kind of settled on the term Korean-Kiwi. (K3son)

Now I am Mexikiwi. (S2mother)

It is not, however, entirely up to the individual to choose their ethnicity. Leibkind (1999) comments that ethnicity is simultaneously ascribed and achieved since "the meaning it acquires for one's total identity can also be a matter of choice" (p. 141).

Participants from most of the language groups mentioned feeling marginalized by New Zealanders. The migrant parents, with their foreign accents and/or non-Anglo-Celtic appearance, are asked where they are from, and even how long they are staying, by those who assume they are sojourners or tourists.

“When are you going back?” “I live here permanently, thank you.” I take it with humor, as a joke. (G2mother)

Two Asian mothers talk of what Espiritu and Wolf (2001), working in the American context, referred to as Asians being “inassimilable”:

Somehow we couldn’t assimilate into the community, not just because of the language barriers. So now we just accept the differences. (K1mother)

Yes, people here view us differently, even though we are permanent residents of New Zealand, the local people still treat us like foreigners. (C1mother)

However, this feeling is shared by those of European origin as well, and has of course been felt by migrants in many contexts:

So even when you are perfectly bilingual . . . you are always seen as a foreigner who may speak English well, but . . . I always feel . . . yes, you are not completely accepted, you don’t belong. (D3mother)

This phenomenon can be seen as an example of the marginal man (Park, 1928; Stonequist, 1937), although the children of the Dutch migrant will not be a visible minority as the children of Asian migrants are. Particularly in a country of migrants such as New Zealand, there seems to be a social function of asking where a person is from, and if the conversation continues, of asking about the country of origin of parents and grandparents. Recent migrants may find this offensive, clearly identifying the migrant as not belonging, but it could, perhaps, be attributed to influence from the indigenous Māori culture where place is given great importance and where formal greetings involve reciting one’s genealogical ties with a place of origin. David Fong (2016) wrote an elegant account (with the apt title *The First 3 Questions I Get Asked: Where Are You From? No, Where Are You Really From? Do You Work in IT?*) of how he as what he describes as fifth generation Chinese in New Zealand felt obliged to relate to his ancestral village in China, even finding out the name of a mountain and a river to which he could affiliate in his Māori greeting.

Many migrants intend to return to their country of origin at some point, and many more are able to visit occasionally. Due to the remoteness of New Zealand, these visits are expensive, but digital contact is, to some extent, a way of keeping transnational channels open. If no return is envisaged by the migrants or their children, there is less need for the heritage language to be passed on.

But I have traditionally considered it was Kiwi first because they were born here, and there was a great chance that they would stay here for most of their lives, so I did not want to raise them so exclusively French. (F1mother)

However, sometimes the parents who migrated may want to return:

Because [my mother] always wants to go back to Spain, the truth is that she doesn’t like New Zealand much and I think that’s the reason. She will be back in Spain one day and she wants her daughters to be able to speak with her and her family and everybody. Her best friends live in Spain and all her family also speak Spanish. (S1daughter-a)

And sometimes the young person themselves may envisage a future where they will need linguistic and cultural competence, either within the ethnolinguistic community in New Zealand or back in the parents’ country of origin:

I’ve been thinking of further ahead like if you get married to a Korean you’re going to have to be able to speak to the parents to show respect and all that. So I thought that I may as well learn the language while I had the time to and I did hear that it gets much more difficult as you get older so I thought that it would be optimal to do it as soon as possible. (K3son)

Anthias (2012) problematizes the notion of *generation* in the sense of first- and second-generation migrants, of making a clear-cut distinction between those who migrated and their children who were born in the new country, pointing out that continuing transnational connections of both the migrants and their children blur this line. Actual visits to their parents’ country of origin as well as digital communication with the extended family inform the imagined return as adults of the children of migrants.

Turner (1969) wrote about liminal entities as being “neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial” (p. 95). Since his work, the anthropological concept of liminality, which was first used to describe rites of passage and the crossing of a metaphorical threshold (*limen* in Latin), has been applied to a wide range of contexts, including the experience of migration (Hoey, 2016). Some of the young New Zealand-born participants in this study report this kind of marginalization, feeling that they are neither one thing nor the other.

Two Korean teens spent some time in Korea:

I thought if I went back I would feel this connection because they’re all Asian, but then I felt more disconnected than I was here. (K2daughter)

I like Korea, Korean music, culture and celebrities, but somehow I felt foreign when I was there. (K1son)

This permanent sense of not quite belonging was dealt with pragmatically by a young girl with parents from Spain:

When I am in New Zealand I tell people I’m Spanish and then when I am in Spain, I’m from New Zealand. (S1daughter-a)

She does not, however, seem to feel that appearing to be from somewhere else is entirely negative:

I feel I've always taken a lot of pride in being Spanish, and I've always liked something to identify me so when I meet people that's one of the first things that they found out about me. I feel proud of it and I want people to know that I have this awesome thing up my sleeve that most people don't have. (S1daughter-a)

Several participants have suggested that some New Zealanders are more open to contact with migrants than others and that some migrants are more open to contact with New Zealanders:

If you observe, you will find those Chinese people who integrate with Kiwis are relatively open and active. (C1daughter)

Maybe [my daughters] socialize with the more open Kiwis. (S1mother)

Others point out that it is easier to socialize with other people with Asian ethnicity:

Just not even the fact that I can speak Korean it's just the fact that I'm Asian, like I'm able to get along with other Asians like other bilingual Asians a lot better. Because we can like we have this kind of connection. (K2daughter)

Whereas this young New Zealand-born Korean points out that ethnic belonging is an oversimplification of the complexities of transnational mobility and transethnic relationships:

Cultures mix now and they all kind of interbreed there's hybrids everywhere and I don't think it's a meaningful thing to do just wondering do I belong to this or belong that. I think you are what you are. (K3son)

This resonates with the comment by Espiritu and Wolf (2001) suggesting that it is possible to maintain a strong minority identity, a hyphenated identity, and network while still conforming to "forces of acculturation and assimilation" (p. 176). At the other end of the experience, this French mother feels that her ethnicity is fading and becoming irrelevant to her life and her sense of belonging in New Zealand:

I am almost not French any longer. (F2mother)

Conclusion

In the most recent New Zealand census, 23.1%, almost a quarter of the population of Auckland, New Zealand's largest and most diverse city indicated that they had Asian ethnicity. The nationwide figure was 11.8% Asian. This can be compared with the European group at 74% nationally and 59.3%

in Auckland. In Auckland, the Indian population is increasing most of all, with a 48.4% increase between 2006 and 2013, compared with a 16.2% increase in the Chinese population in the same period. In Christchurch, where this study was carried out, the figures are 83.9% European, and just 7.9% Asian, with a concentration of those reporting Asian ethnicity in the western suburbs of Christchurch. Less than 2% of the population of Christchurch identifies as having Chinese ethnicity, compared with 0.8% Indian (Statistics New Zealand, n.d.). This means that Asians are a much smaller and so perhaps more visible minority in Christchurch, with its mainly Anglo-Celtic population, than in Auckland.

Zhu and Li (2016) point out that the overseas Chinese in general have not prioritized the maintenance of their ethnic languages, but that their motivations for learning, maintaining, and using languages are associated with the families' and individuals' "sense of belonging and imagination" (p. 657) rather than necessity and opportunity, so we might expect the usual language shift (Fishman, 1991) to take place over a couple of generations. Li (2016, p. 8) attributes this rapid shift to the majority language in the place of settlement to overseas Chinese focusing on trying to learn the local language(s) as well as dispersed settlement patterns and the migrants being involved in service trades and thus interacting with the local population. However, the increasing numbers of new migrants from Asia in particular (80% of Asians in Christchurch were born overseas), including those who come for education, may keep minority languages alive for longer than this in the Asian ethnolinguistic communities in accordance with Stage 6 of Fishman's (1991) Gradual Disruption Scale, Intergenerational Community–Neighborhood–Community links on a daily basis.

May (2002) commented on the possibility that people may adopt cultural and social practices without diminishing their allegiance to "an 'encompassing group' with which they most closely identify" (p. 13). With circular migration patterns, ubiquitous access to digital channels of communication and unprecedented mobility of young people, acquiring their parents' languages is less about the heritage of the children of migrants and more about developing belonging in multiple locations for these young people raised in what Turner (1969) termed liminal space "betwixt and between" two languages and cultures.

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