

# A Thai who has Chinese blood:

## Acculturation and identity perception among the third generation Sino-Thai in Bangkok

Author: Palita Prattanasanti  
Supervisor: Astrid Norén-Nilsson



## Abstract

Bangkok is a multicultural metropolis where different cultures are exchanged and frequently in contact. The Chinese diaspora has settled in Bangkok for a long period of time. The intermarriage between the Thai and the Chinese has created a complex identity known as Sino-Thai for their descendants. This study aimed to explore the identity perception of the third generation Sino-Thai in Bangkok by applying acculturation theory. Particularly, Berry's four acculturation strategies: assimilation, segregation, integration and marginalization were used to define identity perceptions of the third generation Sino-Thai in Bangkok, through four domains of acculturation: food, language, social interaction as well as ritual and religious practices. As a result, this thesis found that this group of Sino-Thai perceived themselves as "*Thai Chue Sai Chin*" (*A Thai who has Chinese blood*). This group of participants showed a distinct integration characteristic according to Berry's acculturation strategies, which were displayed consistently throughout the four domains of acculturation.

Keywords: Acculturation, Acculturation strategies, Sino-Thai, Chinese diaspora, Identity perception

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background and Research Questions

This thesis interrogates into the identity of segments of the Chinese diaspora in Bangkok, specifically the third generation Sino-Thai. Bangkok is diverse in terms of ethnicity and background of the population. Overseas Chinese is a dominant group that has played an important role in terms of economic and politics in Thai society for a very long time. The distinct characteristic of the Sino-Thai is that they are born and raised in Thailand but they have a Chinese ancestry background. Therefore, the overseas Chinese or Sino-Thai in Bangkok is a potential group to study regarding identity perception in the context of acculturation.

The first generation of Chinese diaspora in this thesis refers to the group of Chinese that migrated to Thailand between the 1930s to 1950s. The second generation are Chinese Thai who were born between 1960s-1970s. The third generation are Sino-Thai who were born during 1980s-2000s (Banchanont, 2019). Over this period, there have been important shifts in the status of the Chinese diaspora and their descendants in Thailand. During Thailand's nationalist campaign from 1939 to 1942, the assimilation policy was implemented by the Thai state in order to suppress "Chineseness" in Thai society. Therefore, the identity of being a Chinese or of a Chinese heritage became shameful. Several decades later; however, this attitude became less intense in Thai society, raising questions about how Sino-Thais experience their identity today. This thesis is, therefore, going to focus on the question of identity perception of the third generation Sino-Thai through the framework of acculturation, particularly Berry's (2008, 2006, 2005) acculturation strategies. The model proposed by Berry has put emphasis on the co-existence of several cultures in a society which can contextualize the understanding of the acculturation process (Shafaei et al., 2016, p. 140). Thus, the examination in the complex identity of the Sino-Thai appears evidently relevant. My research questions are as following:

Main research question:

*How does the third generation of the Chinese diaspora in Bangkok perceive their identity?*

And sub question:

*What strategies of acculturation do the third generation overseas Chinese in Bangkok pursue?*

## **1.2 Literature review**

This thesis looks into the transition of positionality and identity perceptions of third generation Sino-Thai in Bangkok in contemporary Thai society. The main question guiding this literature review is “In what context does third generation overseas Chinese Thais find themselves in relation to integration processes in contemporary Thai society?”. Thus, the literature review will facilitate answering the research questions and help situate the findings. The content is divided into four main themes, namely: Knowledge gap, The ethnic Chinese in Thailand, Assimilation and Acculturation.

### **1.2.1 Knowledge gap**

The ethnic Chinese constitutes the largest population in the world. There is a large number of Chinese residing in many parts of the world outside mainland China. The largest overseas Chinese population is the Chinese diaspora residing in Southeast Asia, especially in Thailand. The number of overseas Chinese population residing in Thailand is approximately 9.6 million people which is 14 percent of the total population of 68,863,514 people (“World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision,” 2017). The number of Chinese descents in Thailand (Sino-Thai or the people who are of partial Chinese descent) is up to 26 million people and considered up to 40 percent of total population (West, 2009).

There are numerous studies on the overseas Chinese, for example, on the settlement of overseas Chinese (Mackie, 2003), the impact of the Chinese diaspora on economic growth in host countries (Priebe and Rudolf, 2015), as well as China and Southeast Asia's ethnic Chinese state and diaspora in contemporary Asia (Bolt, 2000). Existing studies on the Chinese in Thailand deal with assimilation of the Chinese in Thai society (Skinner, 1957), textual and literary representation of the Chinese in twentieth century Thailand (Chaloemtiarana, 2014), relationship between Thai state and ethnic Chinese (Wongsurawat, 2016), Neo-Nationalism in China and Thailand (Callahan, 2003), assimilation and language shift of the Chinese in Thailand (Morita, 2003), Chinese language maintenance in Thai society (Lee, 2014), Chinese population in Thailand and Political identity (Rappa, 2014), and the social capital of being Chinese in Thai politics (Wongsurawat, 2019a). These studies on overseas Chinese in Thailand focus on the various themes of assimilation, literary representation of the ethnic Chinese, the relationship of the ethnic Chinese and Thai state and the involvement of this ethnic group in Thai politics. However, none of the aforementioned research has employed the acculturation theory to the Sino-Thai in Bangkok.

Bangkok is considered as a multicultural metropolis due to the diversity of population and its cultural background. Thus, there are high potentials of frequent engagement in terms of intercultural contact and cultural exchange, both directly and indirectly, intentionally and unintentionally. The overseas Chinese or Sino-Thai in Bangkok, therefore, becomes a significant group to study in the context of acculturation. By applying acculturation theory, specifically the acculturation strategies to examine the group of the third generation Sino-Thai can help identify their complex identity formation to be more apparent and more tangible. Due to the complexity of the third generation Sino-Thai's identity, understanding the process of acculturation of the overseas Chinese in Bangkok and their identity perception can be beneficial in the field of intercultural studies and assist in apprehension of the relationship between acculturation and complex identity formation.

### **1.2.2 The ethnic Chinese in Thailand**

The ethnic Chinese have lived in what is now Thailand since the time of the Chinese Northern Song dynasty (960-1127) (Choy, 2013; Niyomsilpa, 2012). There is evidence of continuous Chinese settlement in Thailand beginning in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Skinner, 1960). The ethnic Chinese are known to have one distinctive characteristic, they are inclined to preserve and maintain their own identity over the years and over generations despite they having lived apart from their ancestral homeland.

Niyomsilpa (2012) has divided the migration of the Chinese into four waves. The First Wave began during Qing dynasty (1644) when more than 1.5 million Chinese immigrants migrated to Southeast Asia and established diaspora communities in this region, in which the majority of the migrants were men (Niyomsilpa, 2012, p. 3). The Second Wave originated after the opium war (1858-1860) and it was called the "Chinese contract coolie migration" which approximately 5 million Chinese labor migrated abroad (ibid). The Third Wave started after the overthrow of the Qing dynasty in 1911. The Chinese immigrated to Southeast Asia to escape from civil war and Communist party revolution in 1949 (Niyomsilpa, 2012, p.4). The Fourth Wave occurred after the economic reform in 1978. The destination of this migration differs from the previous waves. The Chinese immigrants in this era mostly migrated to developed countries in other regions outside of Asia (Niyomsilpa, 2012, pp. 5-6).

With the fear of republican ideology, especially the revolution in China which ended the Qing dynasty, King Vajiravudh authored "Jews of the Orient" in 1914, an essay published

in one of the nation's leading newspapers, to promote the idea that the Chinese in Thai society was harmful to the country because they exploited the country's asset and they were in control of a major economy, likening this to the position of Jewish people in Europe. He emphasized the concept of "Other Within" and firmly stated that Thai and Chinese were separate races. He also claimed that the Chinese would never become good citizens but only take benefit from the place they live in for the sake of their own wealth (Chaloemtiarana, 2014, p. 169).

During the modernization period in Bangkok, there was a large influx of Chinese labor to Thailand during 1918 to 1931 (Chaloemtiarana, 2014, p. 167). During this time, the occupation of the newcomer immigrants was mainly heavy labor. The unflattering behavior, which did not match the etiquette of the high-class people, of lower-class Chinese coolie differed from so-called Thai "proper" norms led to the clash between two different cultures (ibid). The intermarriage between Chinese and Thai created descendants who were referred to "Lukchin", which literally means the children of the Chinese (*Luk = Children, Chin = Chinese*), and became a new identity category (Chaloemtiarana, 2014, p. 167; Morris, 2000, p. 334). Chaloemtiarana (2014, p.167) indicates that the first and the second generation overseas Chinese have been associated with the term "Jek" which used to be a neutral term to describe this ethnic group. However, it was later associated with negative meaning and was used to discriminate and insult the Chinese. Thus, it is more common for the Sino-Thai today, especially second and third generation, to use the word "*Thai Chue Sai Chin*" (*a Thai who has Chinese blood*) and "Sino-Thai" to describe themselves (ibid). Therefore, in this thesis, the term "Sino-Thai" is used to define people in Thailand who have Chinese ancestry.

A Thai nationalism campaign was launched by Phibun's regime during 1939 to 1942 to force the assimilation in Thai society. The Chinese and Sino-Thai had to discard their Chinese surnames and created new Thai ones. In legislation aspects, several laws had been issued aiming to reduce the exposure to Chinese language and culture. Chinese schools were under the state's control and all schools in Thailand were required to teach Thai language. Several Chinese schools were closed down and Chinese newspapers were banned under Phibun's order. Thus, Chinese language schools were almost shut down and Chinese education in Thailand had come to an end by the end of World War II (Chaloemtiarana, 2014, p. 171). As a consequence, Sino-Thai who were born and raised in Thailand lost ability in terms of Chinese language proficiency due to the less exposure to their own culture in schools and daily lives.



In the 1960s, the authoritarian regime had lost its firm grip on Thai society (Chaloemtiarana, 2014, p. 180). There was an increase of the urban middle-class including Sino-Thai community from the wealth and better education. The Sino-Thai did better economically and gradually became more educated. They had become a new educated middle-class and members of the power elites. This generation of Sino-Thai was no longer fit in the negative image of the Chinese painted by King Vajiravudh (Chaloemtiarana, 2014, p. 180).

Chaloemtiarana (2014) explains that the fear of Communism was spreading in Southeast Asia in the 1970s. The Thai state was concerned regarding the spreading of communism and the domino effect from neighboring countries that could also affect Thailand. By this period, more than 90 percent of the Sino-Thai had abandoned Chinese citizenship and instead hold Thai citizenship. In order to lessen the Sinophobia phenomenon, the Thai state had to reassure that the Sino-Thai were counted as Thai citizens who should be loyal to their country and had a responsibility in Thailand's security (Chaloemtiarana, 2014, p. 180).

Thailand had grown into a double-digit growth economic by 1990s. The numbers of the middle-class grew rapidly. More and more students were entering the university, many of which were Sino-Thai. Due to the influx of new graduates, the government service positions, which used to be the standard career for graduates, were too limited. This has led to changes in terms of occupation since the Sino-Thai graduates have to find positions in private sectors (Chaloemtiarana, 2014, p. 180). Increasingly, the well-educated Sino-Thai middle-class have been procuring positions in several influential sectors, for example, political, economic and academic.

As we have seen above, from the earlier migration in the 1930s to present, the identity of ethnic Chinese in Thai society has gone through several transitions since the assimilation policy during military dictator Phibun's period. On the other hand, the changes in the socioeconomic status of the Chinese, from a heavy laborer to educated middle class, and up to upper class, have significantly affected to the identity formation of the Sino-Thai in contemporary Thai society. The evidence can be seen in literary and media representation of the ethnic Chinese. Chaloemtiarana's (2014) study on textual and literary representations of the Chinese in Twentieth-Century Thailand displays the transition of the positionality of ethnic Chinese in the context of modern and contemporary Thailand. The author concludes that there is minimal anti-Chinese sentiment display in textual and literary representations during this period. From this, it is discernible that the Sino-Thai are seen as an integral part of Thai society (Chaloemtiarana, 2014, p. 195). In today's context, the life of Sino-Thai family

has been positively portrayed in mainstream media like TV series such as *Through the Dragon Design* (1990) and *In Family We Trust* (2018) and also through well-known novels such as *Life with grandfather* (1976), and *Letters from Thailand* (1970). This reflects the changes in perception of Chinese identity from the negative approach during Phibun's period to a positive one in the present day.

The ethnic Chinese are very diverse, consisting of several different dialectic communities. This thesis will focus on the third generation of Sino-Thai who are descendants of the Chinese immigrants during the Third Wave migration. The first generation of Chinese diaspora in this thesis refers to the group of Chinese that migrated to Thailand between 1930s to 1950s (Banchanont, 2019). The majority of the Chinese immigrants in Thailand during this period were from the southern parts of China, mostly from Guangdong province and Fujian province which are mainly dialectic group of Teochew and Hakka (Niyomsilpa, 2012). The second generation is Sino-Thai who were born between 1960s-1970s. The third generation is Sino-Thai who were born during 1980s-2000s.

### **1.2.3 The overseas Chinese and assimilation**

#### **Assimilation theory**

Assimilation theory was introduced in the United States by sociologists from University of Chicago (Park, 1928; Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918). In the melting-pot environment of the United States, where numerous immigrants take parts in creating the country's identity, assimilation theory has been applied in order to examine identity formation of ethnic groups and how the immigrants and their descendants blend into the American society (Tarkulwaranont et al., 2001). Assimilation is a gradual process in which the minority group absorbs and becomes a part of the mainstream group seamlessly until they are no longer distinguishable between the two. Assimilation theory aims to study on how immigrants shift their behaviors to become more similar to the native host (Gordon, 1964; Park, 1928; Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918; Warner and Srole, 1945).

#### **Assimilation theory and overseas Chinese in Thailand**

The same concept of assimilation was applied to the Chinese in Thai society. When it comes to theory regarding overseas Chinese in Thailand, Skinner's total assimilation theory is usually a starting point of the discussion. In *Chinese Assimilation and Thai Politics in Contemporary Thailand* (1957), the author presents his arguments by utilizing the political

scene of Thailand to analyze and predict the situation of the overseas Chinese. His main arguments are as follow:

1. The indicator of total assimilation is when descendants of the immigrants identify themselves in almost all social situations and public sphere as Thai, speak the language with native competency and interact with Thai more often than with Chinese (Skinner, 1957, p. 237).

2. The fourth generation Chinese will no longer exist because they will be completely merged into Thai society (Skinner, 1957, p. 237).

3. The factors that contribute to the seamless assimilation of the overseas Chinese in Thai society are cultural similarities, food, religion, intermarriage, education and nationalism (Skinner, 1957, p. 238).

4. The author predicts that the assimilation rate is expected to remain high in the future due to the absence of impact from the Chinese communist power in Thailand and relaxation of Thai policy towards Chinese (Skinner, 1957, p. 250).

Skinner's influential prediction is the total assimilation of the Chinese into Thai society. The author claims that the governmental policy of Thailand combined with the characteristics of the Thai political elite play a key role in influencing the rate of Chinese assimilation in Thai society (Skinner, 1957, p. 239). The prominent example was the assimilation policy under the nationalist dictator, Phibun, during 1939 to 1942, when Chinese identity was oppressed by the state.

### **Critiques of assimilation theory**

Skinner's theory of total assimilation was challenged by numerous scholars (Auethavornpipat, 2011; Chan and Tong, 1993; Morita, 2007; Wongsurawat, 2019b). Wongsurawat (2019b) argues that the ethnic Chinese in Thailand has complex assimilations beyond Skinner's fourth generations framework. The study shows that Skinner's theory of total assimilation cannot be generalized to all the overseas Chinese community in different regions in Thailand. The author's comparative study between the overseas Chinese community in Bangkok and Udonthani shows that the overseas Chinese community in Udonthani was transformed into an extension of the Chinese nation-state due to the fact that they are more connected to political personalities in the Chinese government rather than their fellow ethnic Chinese in central Thailand (Wongsurawat, 2019b).

Morita (2007) identifies the shortcomings of Skinner's paradigm. Firstly, Thai and Chinese ethnics are not homogeneous groups because they consist of several dialect groups. Moreover, there are no fixed standards which can clearly identify that the Chinese have assimilated into Thais. Secondly, the concept of assimilation was first developed in the United States where various ethnic groups participated in the creation of a new nation and a new identity. However, it could not apply the same way in the case of the overseas Chinese in Thailand due to the difference in the melting pot environment of the United States. Thirdly, Thai and Chinese have been exposed to the Western culture during the modernization period causing both cultures to appear to be more similar (Morita, 2007, p.127). Finally, the assimilation process cannot be understood as a completely straight line or a one-way process. It appears that not only were the Chinese influenced by Thai social context but the Thai were also influenced by the Chinese which can be seen in religious practices, language and cuisine (ibid).

The last point raised by Morita (2007) convincingly encourages me to investigate further with regards to the process of cultural integration of the overseas Chinese. I discovered that the concept of acculturation appears to fit in this case as it explains this phenomenon to be a dual process in exchange between two different cultures which will be discussed in more details in the next section.

#### **1.2.4 Alternative to assimilation: Acculturation**

##### **Acculturation theory**

The classic definition of acculturation was introduced by Redfield, Linton and Herskovits in 1936 as "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (Redfield et al., 1936, p. 149). Berry (2005, pp. 698–700) defines the term acculturation as a dual process of both cultural and psychological changes from the contact between two or more cultures. Acculturation leads to changes in lifestyle and culture of people. The relation between two cultures can be identified as dominant or host culture and non-dominant culture. Acculturation is a long-term process which leads to psychological and sociocultural adaptations between two cultures (Berry, 2005; Sam and Berry, 2006). Furthermore, acculturation covers all the changes caused by the contacts between different cultures, both on individual and collective levels.

Acculturation theory has been applied in various research disciplines. It originated in the field of anthropology and developed in sociology (Sam and Berry, 2006, p.9). Acculturation has been employed in psychology studies (Berry, 2008, 2005; Sam and Berry, 2006). Moreover, this theory has been applied to the studies of migration (Bhatia and Ram, 2009; Muhammad et al., 2016).

### **Berry's acculturation strategy**

Berry's (2005, 2008) acculturation strategies consist of four categories of acculturation traits which aim to conceptualize how individual and groups acculturate. Acculturation strategies are assimilation, separation, integration and marginalization. Assimilation refers to the situation which the non-dominant group accepts and adopt the new culture but abandon their own culture. Separation refers to when there is a clear gap between dominant and non-dominant culture. Integration occurs when there is a maintenance of both dominant and non-dominant culture. Marginalization refers to when there is low cultural maintenance of both cultures (Berry, 2008, 2006, 2005).

This model challenges the assumption that non-dominant culture will eventually assimilate and absorb into the dominant society (Berry, 2008, p. 331). This statement contradicts Skinner's prediction of total assimilation of the overseas Chinese in Thailand. It seems more appropriate to apply this model to study the third generation Sino-Thai in Bangkok due to its complex identity surrounded by the multicultural environment. The special characteristic of the Sino-Thai is that they have a Chinese ancestry background but they are born and raised in Thailand. Applying acculturation theory to further research on their identity perception is suitable since cultural identity and ethnic identity are associated with the degree of cultural heritage maintenance (Liebkind, 2006, p. 81). Berry's acculturation strategies model will also help contextualize the analysis and concretely identify which categories that the third generation Sino-Thai in Bangkok pursue in the acculturation process.

### **1.3 Disposition**

This thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 2 discusses methodology and ethical considerations of this thesis. Chapter 3 deals with theory regarding acculturation theory and Berry's acculturation strategies. Chapter 4 is the empirical data and analysis of this study. Chapter 5 is the conclusion of acculturation and third generation Sino-Thai.

## **2. Methodology**

There are several factors to be considered when defining or selecting appropriate and efficient methodological approaches as it will affect the whole process of the study. This section is divided into two parts. The first section covers data collection which asks three questions: what, how and why in order to figure out what data to be collected, how to perform the data collection and what the legitimate reasons are for choosing this type of methodology. The second section will cover challenges and ethical issues that can occur during the data collection process of the thesis.

### **2.1 Data collection**

This thesis deals with the perception of the identity of a group of Chinese diasporas in Thailand, particularly the third generation Sino-Thai in Bangkok. The data that needs to be collected, apart from previous literatures and academic papers, include the individual's opinions and feelings regarding their own identity. Thus, a qualitative approach is considered to be the most appropriate method to address the research problems.

The third generation Sino-Thai in Bangkok was selected for three main reasons. First, Bangkok is a diverse metropolis due to its population and its diverse cultural background. Hence, there are high potentials of engagement in terms of cultural exchanges, both directly and indirectly. Therefore, the overseas Chinese or Sino-Thai in Bangkok is selected as a potential group to study in the context of acculturation. Secondly, as mentioned earlier, there is an apparent gap in academic research of the third generation Sino-Thai in Bangkok. The final reason for choosing this subjected group as a case is the fact that I am a Sino-Thai myself. Since I have a similar cultural background with the participants, this would help facilitate data collection.

As the main theme of this thesis regards the individual's identity perception, therefore, this study used interviews as a method to gather information. Empirical data was collected through semi-structured interviews with ten third generation Sino-Thai who live in Bangkok (see Table 1). Purposive sampling was selected as a strategic way to ensure that the sample is relevant to the research questions (Bryman, 2012, p. 418). There were two criteria for selecting the sample. First, they have to be third generation Sino-Thai who were born in 1980s-2000s. Second, they were born, raised and have resided in Bangkok. Apart from these two points, the research participants from the sample share several characteristics that were

not included in the selection criteria. First, they are all female. Second, they all hold at least a Bachelor degree which indicates that they are educated citizens.

Table 1. Informant Sample

No.	Name <sup>1</sup>	Gender	Age	Occupation
1	Baitoey	Female	27	Marketing personnel
2	Chompoo	Female	27	Office worker
3	Khanoon	Female	28	Office worker
4	Mamuang	Female	27	Office worker
5	Maprao	Female	26	Housewife
6	Noina	Female	27	Lawyer
7	Salee	Female	24	Office worker
8	Somoh	Female	27	Private company employee
9	Tangmo	Female	24	Marketing trainee
10	Tubtim	Female	27	Master's student

The interview sessions were conducted through calls on the social media application Line. Thai language was used throughout the interview to make the participants feel at ease and are willing to open up. Moreover, since the main focus of this thesis is the issue of identity, using local language or native language of the respondents would be the most suitable. The interview was noted and then transcribed and translated to English. This sample groups were conducted in a small scale and do not represent the whole group of Chinese diasporas. Hence, the findings in this thesis might not be able to generalize and apply to all Chinese diaspora in Thailand.

Questions regarding identity will inevitably involve people's opinions and feelings, thus, conducting a semi-structured interview is considered an appropriate method for this thesis. Bryman (2012, p. 471) describes the semi-structured interview as one where the researcher has a concrete scope or specific topics that will be asked in the interview, usually by a prepared a list of questions based on an interview guide. The questions do not have to follow strictly in the questionnaire and the extra questions or follow-up questions can be asked according to the situation during the interview. The important point is that all the prepared questions must be similar to all interviewees (Bryman, 2012, p. 471).

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<sup>1</sup> Fictional names are used in order to protect the informants' anonymity

Furthermore, a semi-structured format allows the interviewer to ask follow up questions according to the interviewees' answer which is quite flexible compared to a structured interview. Due to the flexibility of a semi-structured interview, it encourages the interviewer to go off-topic. This can also give the interviewer an insight that it might not be expected before (Bryman, 2012, p. 470). The qualitative interview allows researchers to collect detailed answers, which can be coded and processed further (Bryman, 2012, p. 470). More limitations may arise if a quantitative method was implemented as it is less flexible and not as appropriate to ask open-ended questions.

## **2.2 Challenges and ethical considerations**

In doing social science research, there are potential issues in terms of challenges, limitations, risks and ethical issues that need to be considered. In this thesis, a factor that I consider as a challenge is positionality. The definition of positionality according to Crawford et al., (2017, p. 9) is an awareness of the researcher's identity including gender, class, race, age, relationship with participants and how these social positions might have an effect on a research process and data collection. In this thesis, as I myself have an overseas Chinese background, I would consider my positionality as an insider and so this thesis would follow the perspective of an insider. There are pros and cons of having this positionality. The positive side is the sense of inclusiveness with my research participants, they were willing to open up more easily if we share the same background and speak the same language. On the other hand, results might differ if the respondents were interviewed by an outsider.

This study was conducted according to the ethical guidelines of the Swedish Research Council (CODEX, 2019). The participants were informed that the interviews are for study purposes only and that information provided by the interviewees is only used for Master thesis. Consent of all participants was obtained prior to the interview sessions. All participants were also informed that the participation in the interview sessions can be terminated by the respondent at any time and with no consequences. The collected data will be treated as confidentiality and stored safely. Therefore, all names of the participants have been altered to protect the participants' anonymity.

## **3. Theoretical Framework and Concepts**

This section is going to discuss the main theory of this thesis and is divided into four parts as follows. The first part is the background of acculturation theory. The second part



discusses Berry's acculturation strategies. The third part deals with the domains of acculturation. The fourth part covers the topic of acculturation and ethnic identity.

### **3.1 Acculturation theory**

The definition of acculturation is a gradual and dual process of both cultural and psychological changes from the first-hand contact between different cultures that can be characterized as dominant or host culture and non-dominant culture (Berry, 2008, 2006, 2005; Graves, 1967). During acculturation process, there is a progression of engagement in cultural contact which might lead to conflicts and create the negotiation for adaptive outcomes for both groups in terms of culture and psychology (Berry, 2005, p. 697).

Sam (2006) explains that three factors of acculturation are contact, reciprocal influence and change. Contact is a mandatory factor of acculturation which specifies as "a meeting between at least two cultural groups or individuals who come together in a continuous and firsthand manner (Sam, 2006, p. 14)" and not through a second-hand experience. Reciprocal influence simply means that both cultures mutually influence each other. Nevertheless, it does not mean that only the non-dominant group is changing but emphasizing on the changes occurred in both groups (Sam, 2006, p. 15). Changes involve both the process and outcome of the acculturation. Berry (1991) explains that the changes not only include cultural changes but also include physical, biological, political, economic and social changes.

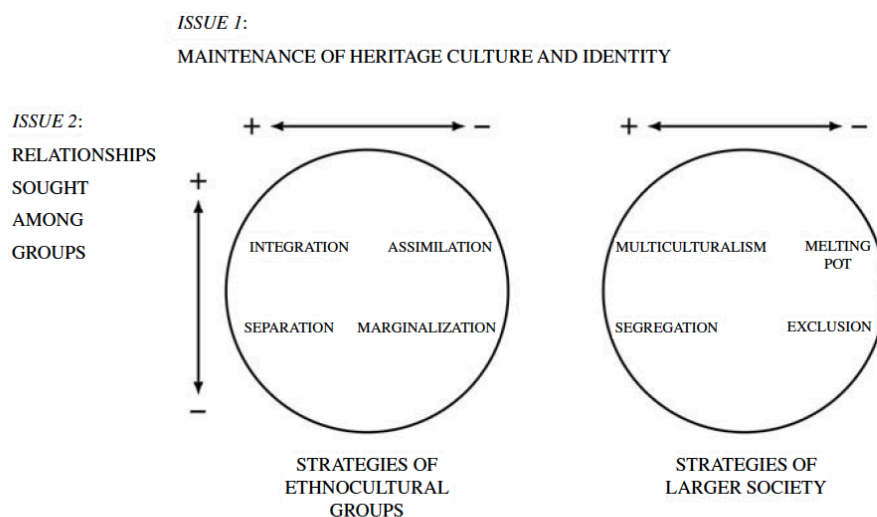
Acculturation can take place on both the individual level and the collective level. Acculturation on the individual level leads to behavioral changes. On the collective level, it leads to changes in a larger scale such as in social structure, institutions and cultural practices (Berry, 2005, pp. 698–699). Berry explains that acculturation proceeds according to an individual's participation in cultural activities of the host country and at the same time maintain their original cultural heritages. The result of acculturation varies, it may not turn out to be only a positive outcome but also possibly a negative one. Acculturation occurs at different rates and goals which can lead to conflicts and difficult adaptations (Berry, 2005, p. 700; Graves, 1967). Both participation and maintenance of different cultures can create four patterns which are called "acculturation strategies" (Sam, 2006, p. 19).

Many early acculturation studies take place in immigrants receiving countries such as Australia and the United States. However, the interest has been expanding to other regions especially Asia due to its pluralistic societies (Hur, 2015; Kwartarini, 2014). People

experience intercultural encounters which result in cultural and psychological alterations. Berry (2005, pp. 700–701) indicates that the findings in acculturation studies cannot be generalized to the people in different parts of the world, however, the strategies adopted by non-dominant individuals appear to be quite similar in different areas. One interesting aspect of acculturation is the one that takes place in the long-settled population and how they maintain their own cultural heritages among cultural diversity in a plural society.

### 3.2 Acculturation strategies

Berry (1980) suggests the concept of acculturation strategies based on the different ways in which every migrant groups and individual undergo acculturation. Acculturation comprises two components which are attitudes and behaviors (Berry, 2005, p. 704). Attitudes refer to individual preference of how to acculturate and behavior refers to a person’s activities that appear during intercultural exposure (ibid). Berry’s four acculturation strategies are namely assimilation, separation, integration and marginalization. The four strategies are based on two basic issues arisen during acculturation. The first issue is “a relative preference for maintaining one’s heritage culture and identity” and the second issue is “a relative preference for having contact with and participating in the larger society along with other ethnocultural groups” (Berry, 2005, 1980). Berry (1980) indicates that these two issues are from the different individual’s attitudes towards one’s own group and towards the other groups. The four strategies can be shown in the figure 1.



Figure

e 1. Acculturation strategies (Berry, 2006, p. 35)

Figure 1 displays the relations between issue 1 (Maintenance of heritage culture and identity) and issue 2 (Relationships sought among groups). This formulation is shown for

both the ethnocultural groups and the larger society. Berry (2006, p. 34) explains that these strategies differ across individuals, groups and societies and also vary depending on the interaction between the strategies of the two groups in contact. This thesis is going to focus on the individual level.

According to Berry (2006, p. 35, 2005, p. 705), from the point of view of the non-dominant ethnocultural groups, assimilation refers to the behavior that individuals do not want to maintain their own cultural identity but seek daily interaction with other cultures. In other words, in this case, individuals prefer to abandon their heritage culture and prefer to be absorbed into the mainstream society. On the contrary, when individuals only wish to maintain their own cultural heritage and at the same time avoid interaction with others, separation is defined (Berry, 2005, p. 705). Integration occurs when there is an interest in both maintaining ones' culture heritage and at the same time participating with other groups as an integral part of the mainstream society (ibid). Marginalization refers to individuals and groups who express little interest in both ethnic and mainstream cultures. In other words, marginalization takes place when people have less interest in maintaining their culture and at the same time refuse to interact with other cultural groups (ibid). Berry (2008, p. 328) indicates that the most likely result of intercultural contacts is some forms of integration or separation. Shafaei et al., (2016, p. 140) describes that integration is usually considered the most successful whereas marginalization is regarded as a failure in the acculturation process among the four acculturation strategies in Berry's model. Assimilation and separation are considered at an intermediate level which falls between the two.

Acculturation strategies have been employed in various academic studies aiming to understand the patterns of immigrant adaptation in mainstream society (e.g. Choi et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2018; Lev Ari and Cohen, 2018). There are several studies regarding the second generation who are transitioning between childhood and adulthood as well as dealing with two cultures (e.g. Berry et al., 2006; Marks et al., 2014). In this study, I would like to apply Berry's acculturation strategies to examine identity perception of the third generation Sino-Thai and identify what categories in four strategies this group of Sino-Thai pursues by using four domains of acculturation: food, language, social interaction as well as ritual and religious practice.

### **3.3 Domains of acculturation**

Berry (1976) (as cited in (Berry, 2005, p. 702) indicates that the acculturation process involves several aspects of changes. Behavioral changes on an individual level might include language use, dressing, eating habits, food preferences (Berry, 2005, p. 702). Also, it may take a form of longer-term adaptation such as social interaction and cultural identity of each group (Berry, 2005, pp. 699–700). This section will unpack domains of acculturation in the themes of: food, language, social interaction as well as ritual and religious practices. These categories are chosen as they encompass all the aspects of change in Berry's acculturation theory.

#### **3.3.1 Food**

There are several studies on dietary acculturation which employed food as a domain of acculturation, for example, in the works of Bundy (2017) and Ramírez et al., (2018). Ramírez et al., (2018) conducted the study based on the relationship between food and ethnic identity in a group of Mexican-American women by using the concept of dietary acculturation paradox as the main departure point. The authors claim that the increased acculturation among Mexican-American group to the United States was in accordance with the increased consumption of fat and the decreased consumption of fruits and vegetables. Moreover, the study discovered that the perception that regards Mexican food as unhealthy created stress among Mexican-American women which significantly affected their self-identification. The participants reasoned that food is an important factor in representing cultural identity. From the study outcome, the authors conclude the idea that traditional Mexican foods were described as unhealthy as it was considered as special-occasion foods, the participants who preferred eating healthy rejected Mexican ways of eating, or in other words, assimilated into American culture in terms of consumption. This study contradicts previous research that the Mexican acculturate to American society and adopt the habits of unhealthy consumption of diet. It appears that the Mexican having such patterns of consumption comes from the idea that the American diet is seen as healthier.

Bundy (2017) examines the relation between food and shopping acculturation. The author studies on the influence of dietary acculturation of British expatriates in Toulouse regarding shopping behaviors. The outcome of this studies can be concluded into three aspects of maintenance (the participants consuming British food abroad), hybridity (the participants feel like they eat “more French”) and hyperculture (consume British food to

express Britishness on special occasions). The conclusion of this study indicates that food has a complexity characteristic during the acculturation process. The author concludes that both acculturated consumption and shopping practices share a similar characteristic in terms of fluidity.

Both studies employ dietary acculturation in different aspects. However, it shows how food plays a crucial role as an identity representation of the immigrants. From this point, it shows various results in food acculturation, for example, the rejection of own heritage (Mexican food) in (Ramírez et al., 2018) and the cultural maintenance of the British (Bundy, 2017).

### **3.3.2 Language**

Language is the most frequently assessed domain in acculturation (Arends-Tóth and Van de Vijver, 2006, p. 153). Language as an indicator of acculturation identifies in the aspects of language proficiency and language used in daily interactions. Acculturation in this aspect examines the relation between language and how it affects the life of the immigrants.

Chrisman et al., (2017) explore the associations between language acculturation, age of immigration, and obesity in the Mexican American. The study shows that individuals with obesity issue were more linguistically acculturated. However, the result varies according to gender and nativity. The author identifies that the language acculturation score among Mexico-born women was not aligned with BMI (body mass index). In nativity aspect, language acculturation appears to be related more to the higher risk of obesity among the U.S. born participants but not in the same way with Mexico-born participants. Chrisman et al., (2017) draw a conclusion that linguistic acculturation is prone to have an influence on the U.S. born Mexican but not to the Mexico-born counterparts.

Hou et al., (2018) apply language acculturation to examine the relations of language competency, acculturation stress and marital quality among Chinese American couples. The outcome of this study shows that there are linkages between language proficiency and marital quality. The study reports that lower levels of linguistic acculturation are in accordance with higher levels of stress. This is due to the stress of being labeled as foreigners. The authors claim that “foreigner stress” would significantly have a negative effect in marital quality in terms of family conflicts.

Language plays a crucial role especially in the life of immigrants as it is a means of communication. These two studies show different angles of language acculturation. Chrisman

et al., (2017) apply in an area of healthcare study while Hou et al., (2018) analyzes in an area of psychological study. However, both studies show the linkage between language acculturation and the effects in the physical and mental health of the immigrants and how well they can acculturate to the society.

### **3.3.3 Social interaction**

Social interaction plays a vital role in the acculturation process as it is a direct contact in terms of cultural exchanges. Yang and Yue (2019) study on the case of shared experiences and resilience of cultural heritage of Chinese students' social interaction with non-host nationals in the United States. The authors examine the acculturation of Chinese students in the United States. The research outcome shows that the strong pride in Chinese culture and the strong sense of patriotism combined with the limited American cultural literacy of the Chinese students makes it more difficult to blend in and communicate with the Americans. As a result, they chose to communicate with other Chinese fellows and other international students which provide them with social and emotional support in the American environment. From this study, it is concluded that this group of Chinese students did not acculturate at all to the American society.

Yoon et al., (2012) study in the case of social connectedness, discrimination and social status as mediators of acculturation/enculturation and well-being of the Asian-American students. The research outcome signifies the social connectedness in mainstream and ethnic communities as well as social status are the effects of acculturation on the subjective well-being, while the effect of enculturation on subjective well-being is influenced by social connectedness and expected social status. The authors conclude that acculturation is positively related to the connectedness in the ethnic community (Yoon et al., 2012, pp. 93–94).

The findings from both studies indicate that social interaction defines the sense of belonging of a person which can affect the adaptation process during acculturation. Negative or positive adaptation depends on several factors such as immigrant's cultural background and host country's cultural literacy.

### **3.3.4 Ritual and religious practices**

Acculturation can be displayed in ritual and religious practices as there is an element of culture attached to it. Morita (2007) focuses on religion and family aspects of the Sino-

Thai. The study discovers that there is a significant degree of the combination between Chinese and Thai influence in terms of ritual and religious practice in Thailand. For example, the Chinese worship both Buddha and Chinese deities, death practices and ancestor worship with Thai influence. Another distinct example is the culture of Sino-Thai represents in the wedding which displays an element of Thai Buddhism, Chinese Confucianism and Western consumerism (Bao, 2001). The author emphasizes that the overseas Chinese in Thailand are different from the Chinese in mainland China, other Chinese diasporas and the Thai (Morita, 2007, p. 139). Chinese culture in Thailand, especially in terms of religion, has been changing as there is an influence of Thai culture and Western consumerism. The author concludes that the Chinese and Thai similarly adopt Western concept due to Thailand's modernization period and both Chinese and Thai cultures are influencing each other.

Formoso (2009) has done comparative research on the case of the "Orphaned Bones" ritual in mainland China and overseas, specifically in Thailand and Malaysia. The study compares the rituals in the context of Malay Muslim and Thai Buddhist and draws a conclusion that the factors consisting economic patterns, religious ideologies and state policies play a significant role in shaping the interethnic relationship (Formoso, 2009, p. 500). The author indicates that the assimilation policy of Thailand had a major influence in blurring the ethnic boundaries between the Thai and the Chinese which made the Chinese absorb the Thai culture whereas Malaysian New Economic Policy reinforced the effects of interethnic rivalry and religious in order to compete in interest of the Malay and the Chinese (ibid).

These domains of acculturation: food, language, social interaction and ritual and religious practices display various aspects of acculturation and immigrant's adaptation during the acculturation process. Even though all the studies have employed different domains to study acculturation, it shares the focus of how these domains reflect the cultural maintenance and cultural adaptation in the life of immigrants.

### **3.4 Acculturation and Ethnic identity**

Ethnic identity has been identified in various ways: as an ethnic component of social identity, a self-identification, a feeling of belongingness, a sense of shared values or an attitude towards one own group (Liebkind, 2001). Liebkind (2006, p.79) points out that ethnicity is a sense of belonging to a particular origin and ancestral background which is used to connect people. Sam (2006, p. 21) identifies that ethnic identity is the self-representation that an individual selects to employ in both contexts of the group they originally belonged to

and a new cultural group. Moreover, the author further explains that ethnic identity is considered as a crucial aspect of acculturation especially when individual or groups have contact with another culture group. For example, prior to acculturation, the group may not be aware of their own ethnic identity until they interact with people of different cultural backgrounds. In this situation, ethnic identity is used to define a sense of identity in accordance with ethnicity (ibid).

Berry (1997) proposes two questions in order to identify strategies used by the immigrants: Is it considered to be of value to maintain one's cultural heritage? and is it considered to be of value to have contact with and participate in the larger society? Four acculturation strategies (assimilation, separation, integration and marginalization) can be identified from the answer "yes" and "no" to two questions. A negative response to the first question and a positive response to the second define assimilation. The reverse defines separation. Integration is defined by both positive answers and marginalization is defined by both negative responses from the immigrants. This model of Berry identifies the idea of multiculturalism which indicates the coexistence of different cultures in a society.

The special characteristic of the Sino-Thai is that they have a Chinese ancestry background but they are born and raised in Thailand. Applying acculturation theory, particularly acculturation strategies, to further research on their identity perception will greatly assist in understanding complex identity formation as cultural identity and ethnic identity are associated with the degree of cultural heritage maintenance (Liebkind, 2006, p. 81). Berry's acculturation strategies model will also help contextualize the analysis and concretely identify which category that the third generation Sino-Thai in Bangkok pursue in the acculturation process.

#### **4. Analysis: Acculturation and the third generation Sino-Thai in Bangkok**

##### **4.1 Identity Perception**

As the main research question of this thesis interrogates into the identity perception of third generation Sino-Thai, all participants were asked regarding their identity perception: specifically, whether they feel more Chinese, Thai or both. Berry's four acculturation profiles were created by applying two senses of belonging: those who have strong sense of belonging of both host culture (Thai) and own ethnic group (Chinese) (integrated), those who have strong sense of Thai ethnicity only (assimilated), those who have strong sense of ethnic



Chinese only (separated) and those who have weak sense of belonging to both Thai and Chinese ethnicity (marginalized).

Eight out of ten participants described their identity as Sino-Thai or “*Thai Chue Sai Chin*” (a Thai who has Chinese blood) which displayed the integration of both Thai and Chinese. The reason they provided was that they were born and raised in Thailand but they had Chinese ancestry and their family still preserved the Chinese traditions. The opinions commonly shared by the participants are expressed in three following quotations:

“I feel that I am a Sino-Thai (*Thai Chue Sai Chin*) because I was born in Thailand but my family is Chinese, they still use dialects to communicate with each other. Also, they still preserve Chinese ritual practices like ancestry worship and Chinese deity worship.” (Tangmo)

“I feel that I am Sino-Thai (*Thai Chue Sai Chin*) because I was born in Thailand but I also have Chinese ancestry. I am 75 percent Chinese.” (Noina)

“I am Sino-Thai (*Thai Chue Sai Chin*) because I have Chinese family background but I was raised in Thailand, exposed to Thai culture. My parents also cannot speak Chinese so I feel like I am Thai but have Chinese heritage.” (Salee)

One of the participants felt that she was Chinese. The main reasons provided were her appearance and closer ties to Chinese traditions and norms.

“I feel more Chinese. First, because of my appearances, I do look like a Chinese. When I went to China, no one could tell that I’m not Chinese. Chinese people speak Chinese to me. Like I told you earlier, I don’t even celebrate Songkran day (Thai New Year) but I do put more emphasis on Chinese New Year so that’s why I feel more Chinese.” (Baitoey)

One participant felt that she was Thai due to the distant exposure of Chinese culture.

“I would say I feel Thai because I have very few exposures to Chinese culture and my family is also not that serious about Chinese traditions. My parents raised me in a Thai way, speak Thai. In ratio, I would say I feel more Thai than Chinese.” (Somoh)

When the participants were asked regarding perception from others about their identities, most of them informed that they were often misunderstood as foreigner such as Chinese due to their appearance in Thailand, but when people interacted with them, they would find out that they were Sino-Thai.

“Based on my appearance, (In Thailand) Thai people could tell that I’m a Sino-Thai but wherever I go, people never think I’m Thai. They will speak to me in Chinese, English or Japanese because I don’t look like a Thai person. They always thought I’m a foreigner.” (Maprao)

“If judging by my appearance, some Thai people sometimes thought I’m Chinese but when I talk they will know that I am not Chinese. So, in that case, I think Thai people considered me as Sino-Thai.” (Chompoo)

Participants reported that they were misunderstood as Chinese when they went abroad due to appearance. Chinese people; however, perceived them as Asians in general.

“Thai people think I’m Sino-Thai. Chinese people mostly think I’m Asian but couldn’t identify which nationality. They feel like I’m a foreigner that can speak Chinese.” (Salee)

“It’s more obvious when I go abroad. In Thailand people usually think I’m Thai because I have black hair and Asian look. Sometimes they misunderstood that I’m a foreigner or a tourist so they speak English with me. When I go abroad, it’s almost zero percent that they will assume that I’m Thai. When they see I have black hair and I am Asian, they will assume that I’m Chinese or Japanese. People abroad would not think about Thailand first.” (Somoh)

Participants were asked how they felt about being Sino-Thai and having Chinese heritage. Some of the participants expressed a positive feeling towards Sino-Thai identity. The reasons were the diversity of cultures; they could enjoy traditions in both cultures. Another reason was that they feel that there were a lot of Sino-Thai in Thailand so there were a lot of people shared the same cultural background as them.

“I feel nothing special, neutral, I don’t feel anything that I’m not full Thai nor full Chinese. I’m satisfied with myself, with this mix. I don’t feel the obvious separation between different races like Thai and Chinese in Thai society. I just live my life according to my family’s norms.” (Salee)

“I feel good about it because Sino-Thai is a majority group in Thailand and it’s pretty good.” (Tangmo)

“I feel good about it because I have another culture to be a part of. I like to be intercultural, be a part of both worlds.” (Noina)

Some participants did not have a special feeling towards Sino-Thai identity but still had a perception that there were a lot of Sino-Thai and people who had Chinese ancestry in

Thai society. Therefore, they felt positive that they were not different from their community.

“I think ethnicity comes with birth, we cannot choose, what matters more is education and occupation which ethnicity doesn’t have any impact on this part. So, I don’t have a special feeling about it but I feel positive about it because I feel no difference from my community.” (Chompoo)

“Nothing specific, because there are a lot of Sino-Thai in Thai society. I think these days not only Sino-Thai family but Thai family in general, we live in harmony. If it’s like Sino-Thai family like mine, we might have Chinese festival or traditions adding up, but as a Sino-Thai, I am quite open with all the traditions. Unlike the Chinese in Singapore or Malaysia that they have quite distinct separation between races. I would say in Thailand it is mixed race.” (Noina)

One respondent expressed the negative feeling towards Sino-Thai identity due to too many traditions on the Chinese side to follow.

“Being a Sino-Thai growing up with a Chinese background family makes me feel like we have way too many traditions. But also depending on how conservative the family is. My family is very conservative. I am not allowed to do a lot of things like piercing and wearing shorts. I’m not able to express my opinion if it’s a conversation of the adults. I compare myself with my friend who comes from a more relaxed Sino-Thai family and a Thai family, they are more open and chill.” (Maprao)

The term “Jek” used to be a neutral term to describe the ethnic Chinese in Thailand but was later associated with negative meaning and used to discriminate and insult the Chinese in Thai society, particularly described the undesirable behaviors (Chaloemtiarana, 2014, p. 176). When asking participants regarding how they felt about this term, most of them expressed neutral feeling towards this term as they thought it was used in a more relaxed manner such as joking among friends.

“I never feel like having small eyes or being “Jek” is a bad thing. I see them as facts, yes, I have smaller eyes and that is not a big deal to make me feel bad. Some people ask me if I can see properly through my small eyes, but I see this as a funny thing that they just don’t understand. I think this word can be used in various situations, both positive and negative ones. Sometimes I use this word to call other people. I feel like society mostly associate this word with negative feelings. I use it in a more neutral meaning, describing a Chinese as “Jek”. But sometimes other people warn me not to use this word because it sounds like an insulting word. Meaning wise, it

links to the behavior of the Chinese like talk loudly in public, not queuing when buying stuffs.” (Maprao)

“I feel neutral. I personally think that they used this word to insult people in the past. Now in today’s context, for me it’s more like a joking word. I don’t feel offended if people use this word to me.” (Salee)

“I think it’s funny and I’m not that serious about this word. Maybe because I’m already the third generation so I don’t feel like this word is used in the negative meaning. I would not feel offended if somebody use this word to me.” (Noina)

“Depending on the context used, if with friends it’s ok. But this word has negative meaning in general, so it should be used carefully.” (Tubtim)

However, three participants expressed a negative feeling towards this word as it was used as a label for the unpleasant behavior of the Chinese. They considered this word as an insult and discrimination towards their identity.

“I would feel offended and irritated because it’s not a nice word to use. To me, this word associated with insult and discrimination that’s why I don’t like it.” (Tangmo)

“I don’t really like this word because it associated with undesirable behaviors like loud voice, not good manners and uncivilized manner. I think the person who use this word towards others doesn’t have good manners.” (Mamuang)

“Jek is the word using to insult Chinese people which is quite rude in my feeling.” (Baitoey)

All participants were asked regarding where in Thai society or hierarchy that Sino-Thai would fit in. The majority of the respondents agreed that the position of the Sino-Thai was middle class and above. The reasons contributed to this were financial statuses, occupations and education levels.

“Middle to upper middle class because the first generation has built themselves from scratch so the next generations were born with stable financial status.” (Tubtim)

“Middle class and above. Because of better financial status and education” (Tangmo)

“Middle class and above. I think it links to job/occupation because I never see the Sino-Thai doing hard labor job like farmer or labor worker, mostly they are Thais.” (Mamuang)

The concept of acculturation strategies proposed by Berry (1980) is a way to understand the ways that individual seeks to acculturate. Four categories have been defined based on two factors: the degree to which individual value and wish to maintain their heritage cultures and identities and the degree to which they prefer to have contact and engage with other groups in the larger society (Berry and Hou, 2017, p. 30). From the answers provided by all the respondents regarding identity perception, the most prevalent acculturation attitude chosen is integration. It appears that the respondents perceived themselves as Sino-Thai or “*Thai Chue Sai Chin*” (a Thai who has Chinese blood) because they were born and raised in Thailand but had Chinese ancestry. Their identity shows the signs of integration because they have a positive approach towards both host culture (Thai) and the culture of their own heritage (Chinese) in intercultural environments. Moreover, most of them enjoy traditions in both cultures. Most participants have a neutral feeling towards the term “Jek” which used to represent the ethnic Chinese. However, some still find this term as an insult to their identity.

## **4.2 Food**

The level of acculturation can be represented through food and consumption (Bundy, 2017; Muhammad et al., 2016; Ramírez et al., 2018). The participants were asked regarding food preferences on different occasions: daily consumption, family gathering, Thai festival and Chinese festival in order to examine the cultural maintenance pattern of the Sino-Thai.

### **4.2.1 Daily consumption**

All participants were asked regarding their food choices on a daily basis. Six participants reported that they preferred Thai food due to the convenience, familiarity and flavor. The opinions commonly shared by the participants are expressed in three following quotations:

“Simple Thai food like single dish meal due to convenience because I have to work.” (Tangmo)

“Mostly Thai food because of familiarity, I like eating SomTum (papaya salad). Also, I like the flavors of Thai food. Another reason is convenience.” (Salee)

“Thai food, like Thai single dish, noodle dish. Because I like the flavor and Thai food is not too heavy unlike Chinese food which is very oily.” (Tubtim)

Two participants described that they had no special preference but also put more focus on convenience.

“I eat anything according to my convenience like single dish or fast food. There are various kind of food choices in Bangkok, so it is easily accessible to international food.” (Chompoo)

“Depending on which meal of the day. I will eat something quick and easy like sandwich and cereal for breakfast. Lunch time I’ve been eating Japanese food lately. Dinner is mostly Thai food. However, these are not fixed according to my convenience and my cravings.” (Somoh)

One participant had Chinese food on a daily basis and did not consume Thai food at all.

“We eat porridge in the morning with Chinese stir fried dishes, no Thai food like curry.” (Maprao)

One participant had Thai-Chinese food which was a Chinese influenced dish like stir-fried on a daily basis.

“I eat Somtum (Papaya salad) everyday but it’s pretty hard to say. Most of the food that I eat still got the influence of Chinese food like stir fried vegetables and I eat that every day. Roasted duck and roasted pork, I don’t really eat it on a daily basis just occasionally.” (Baitoey)

Even though the food choices of the Sino-Thai in the context of daily consumption varies, the pattern in consumption can be seen. Applying Berry’s framework to analyze the daily consumption choice of this group of Sino-Thai, it appears that this group of participants are assimilated as six of participants chose to consume Thai food on a daily basis. The participants put emphasis on convenience, Thai food like single dish and noodle dish are the most common choices. Another factor that participants prefer to eat Thai food on a daily basis are familiarity and flavor. They described that Thai food has a lot of flavors and it’s the food that they consume growing up.

#### **4.2.2 Family gathering**

All participants were asked regarding food preferences in the context of family gathering as this occasion reflects the consumption patterns on a family scale. The responses varied, four participants reported that they will choose either Thai food or Chinese food depending on the size of the family. The participants reported that if eating with an extended

family, which usually joined with grandparent's generation, they were inclined to consume Chinese food. However, if it was a nuclear family, they would eat Thai food.

"If we eat with grandfather, we will choose Chinese food. If we eat only with nuclear family without grandpa, we will eat Thai food." (Mamuang)

"If it's with my father's side of the family, it would be Chinese food because my grandpa is Chinese. Sometimes it can be Thai food or fusion food. My mother's side of the family is Thai and French. So mostly it's Thai food." (Somoh)

Three participants reported that they mostly chose Chinese food and Chinese restaurant for a family gathering.

"Chinese food at Chinese restaurant, (We eat) Dim Sum, stir fried dishes, Sichuan soup, braised chicken, duck dishes." (Maprao)

"Chinese food like boiled Chicken, roasted duck, crispy pork, sea cucumber soup and abalone soup" (Tangmo)

"Chinese seafood restaurant." (Chompoo)

Two participants indicated that they preferred anything but Chinese food.

"It varies but not Chinese food. I only eat Chinese food when it's Chinese festivals. Usually when we eat out for family gathering, we go to a restaurant, depending on what we feel like at that moment, it can be Thai food, Japanese food or Korean Food." (Salee)

"Depends, but definitely not a Chinese restaurant. Maybe Thai food, Western food or Japanese food." (Tubtim)

One participant reported that she had no special preference on this occasion.

"If it's with nuclear family, it depends on everybody's preferences. If it's with my extended family, it also depends. For example, I have to have dinner with my cousins every Sunday, it depends on everyone. Sometimes I took my grandmother to eat Italian food, sometimes Thai food. However, when it is Chinese New Year, it has to be Chinese food." (Baitoey)

From the family gathering aspects, it seems that the pattern of consumption varies depending on the scale of the family. According to Berry's framework, it can be seen that on a nuclear family scale, this group of Sino-Thai shows the sign of assimilation as they are prone to select Thai food. However, on an extended family scale, it has a separation characteristic as this group of Sino-Thai are more inclined towards Chinese food. In some family, there is a clear pattern, for example, only have Chinese food with extended family. In

some family is more relaxed and food preference depends on what people in the family would like to have. Moreover, it appears that this group of Sino-Thai has an open approach towards food, from the choices they reported, it not only limits to Thai food and Chinese food but also take other food such as Western food and Korean food into consideration. Furthermore, the participants can elaborate more on Chinese food and give examples of Chinese food but not with other types of food.

### 4.2.3 Thai festival

When all the participants were asked regarding Thai festival and their food preference on this occasion, the first festival that came into their mind was Songkran day which is traditional Thai New Year. The traditional food during Songkran is a Thai dish called “Khao Chae” which is a cold rice dish served with assorted sweet and savory side dishes (Thai Post, 2018; Thairath Online, 2012). Seven participants out of ten reported that they had no specific preference of food during Thai festival or Songkran day because it was considered as a normal vacation, they usually had a meal together with family but no specific type of food.

“It’s never been specific. We didn’t celebrate, we just travel during the holiday.” (Baitoey)

“My family and I will try new restaurants or exotic food like Sukiyaki, Korean hotpot, big meal that we can share.” (Chompoo)

“Nothing specific. Depends on what we want but not Chinese food. Either Thai food or fusion food because my parents don’t like western food.” (Tubtim)

One participant reported that she had Thai food on Thai festival because she had Chinese food on a daily basis. Another participant indicated that she chose Western food or Japanese food as this occasion was considered as a special occasion.

“I usually eat Western food like steak or Japanese food because it is considered as a special occasion.” (Noina)

One participant reported that her food preference on Thai festival depended on the place. If she ate at home, she would have Thai food. If she ate out with her family, they preferred Japanese food and Thai food.

“If I eat at home it’s Thai food but if eating out, it’s Japanese food. We eat Thai food at home because there’re a lot of people but if we eat out we will prefer dinner time because the restaurants are not too crowded. Usually we eat in a shopping mall not far from home. My family prefers Thai food and Japanese food.” (Salee)



The consumption pattern of the Sino-Thai in the context of Thai festival seems to employ marginalization characteristic. The majority of the participants have no specific preference of food on Thai festival, Songkran in particular, as they considered this occasion as an ordinary vacation. Applying Berry's acculturation strategies framework to analyze in consumption of the context of Thai festival, it appears that the selection of food of the majority of participants during Thai occasion shows marginalization characteristic as they do not choose to consume either Thai or Chinese food in this occasion. From the data, it seems that this group of Sino-Thai displays an open-minded approach towards food choices apart from Thai and Chinese food.

#### **4.2.4 Chinese festival**

When it comes to Chinese festival, all participants thought of Chinese New Year and Tomb Sweeping day. When they were asked regarding food preferences on Chinese festivals, all ten participants reported that they only had Chinese food, especially the food that was used in ancestry worship during Chinese New Year and Tomb Sweeping day such as boiled chicken, pork belly and roasted duck or five spices duck.

“Very similar to family gathering. Chinese food and the food that we used in worshipping ancestor and deities.” (Tangmo)

“Chinese food and ancestor worship food like Four Season roasted duck.” (Noina)

From this data, it is obvious that this group of Sino-Thai has a stronger preference when it comes to food in Chinese festival than in Thai festival. In other words, they have a stricter approach towards Chinese tradition and food. This represents the segregation characteristic according to Berry's framework as it shows a strong sense of Chinese only which represents in food choice during Chinese New Year without any other choices of consumption.

### **4.3 Language**

All participants speak more than one language. They speak Thai as the main language for communication, are fluent in English and have learnt foreign languages (English, Chinese (Mandarin), French, Japanese and Korean) at school. Five participants can speak 4 languages, four participants can speak 3 languages and one participant can speak 2 languages. Six out of

ten participants are able to speak Chinese (Mandarin), and one participant can speak a little Chinese dialect but cannot speak Mandarin. All seven participants who know Chinese also have a Chinese name apart from Thai name; the remaining three do not.

When asking the participants for the reasons of learning Chinese, most of the participants who studied Chinese agreed on the reason of the importance of China as it became a second economic big power globally based on GDP (World Bank, 2017) and the importance of knowing Chinese in terms of job opportunity in the future.

“I started studying Chinese since I was in Grade 7, but I just did it part-time outside school. I was not doing it seriously at that time. I went to Chinese school every Saturday because my mom forced me to. After that I went to university and I had to choose my major. I could foresee how important Chinese is, that’s why in the end I chose Chinese Major.” (Baitoey)

“I studied as major in the university because it would help for job opportunities as Chinese is the second popular language globally. Also, I personally think that Chinese is an interesting language and could be useful when I’m travelling.” (Chompoo)

“I studied at school by my own interest and I studied since then until I graduated from university. My thought has changed when I was in university. I think knowing only English is not sufficient, so I want to know the third language to increase competitive advantage for myself and prepare for the opportunity in the future.” (Tangmo)

“Back then (in my school) they arranged elective courses, so I chose to study Chinese. Then I thought I did well so I kept studying outside school as well which my family also agree in learning 3rd languages (apart from Thai and English) so I kept studying Chinese more seriously. The reason my parents support me because most people can speak English, and Chinese has become popular, so knowing more than 2 languages could benefit in terms of finding a job and increase my chance of getting a job easily.” (Salee)

Apart from the benefit regarding career opportunity, one participant mentioned that learning Chinese made her feel closer to her ancestor’s culture and also contributed to her Chinese side in Sino-Thai identity. Another participant identified that knowing Chinese also provided benefit in learning Chinese know-how and be able to understand more regarding Chinese culture.

“Yes, (it) definitely (contributes to my interest in my Chinese side of Sino-Thai identity). Learning Chinese has increased my exposure to Chinese culture.” (Chompoo)

“I think it’s about ancient knowledge of the Chinese. China has several fields of knowledge like history, philosophy and Chinese medicine. If I know advance Chinese, I can learn much more things and the know-how of the Chinese and also Chinese culture.” (Maprao)

Applying Berry’s framework to analyze language aspects, this group of Sino-Thai was born and raised in Thailand, Thai language becomes their native tongue by default. However, the fact that they can speak more than one languages shows that most participants of this group of Sino-Thai represents distinct integration characteristics, in other words, they master in host country’s language (Thai) and still be able to speak the language of own heritage (Chinese). Some of them even can speak several foreign languages which displays an open-minded attitude towards the intercultural environment. The participants studied Chinese for different purposes. Apart from the benefit in terms of job opportunities, the respondents reported that knowing Chinese has benefited them in terms of cultural maintenance. Knowing Chinese assists them in understanding their cultural heritage and being able to reconnect with their own root.

#### **4.4 Social interaction**

All participants were asked which type of family they live in. Seven participants live in a nuclear family (consists of father, mother and children) and three participants live in an extended family (more than 2 generations living together). One among three participants who live in an extended family is married and lives with the in-law’s family. The remaining two live with their childhood families which they represent the youngest generation of the family.

When asked which ethnic group they interacted with the most, all participants stated that people that were close to them and friend groups were Sino-Thai. This point links to another question regarding discrimination. With respect to the relationship between discrimination and acculturation strategy, many studies have shown that the experience of discrimination influences the acculturation strategy adopted by immigrants. Particularly, the experience of racism of the immigrants discourages a sense of belonging to the host country’s society (Berry and Hou, 2017, p. 30). All participants were asked whether they were bullied or discriminated due to having a Chinese heritage, seven participants reported they never experienced any discrimination as they grew up among Sino-Thai and their friends at school were also mostly Sino-Thai.

“Never because we (Sino-Thai) are not the ethnic minority in Thailand, especially in Bangkok, I’m sure there are a lot of Sino-Thai. I think the people who are pure Thai are very rare these days. However, no matter what ethnicity or family background we have, we can be friends.” – (Noina)

“Never, because I live in Thailand where there are a lot of Sino-Thai and in Thai society we live in harmony regardless of ethnicity. If I live in a country that there are fewer Chinese than in Thailand or Chinese ethnicity is a minority group, I think there will be discrimination like in the U.S.” (Mamuang)

“No, not at all. I think because I grew up among all the same community. All my friends got some Chinese blood and we shared mutual interests. Maybe that’s the main reason why I’ve never been bullied before. But I heard that my sister’s ex-boyfriend, especially his family is a traditional Thai family. They seem to have a biased idea towards Chinese people, but for my personal experience, I’ve never been bullied before.” (Baitoey)

“I think we already blended in in the society, there is no clear indicator to indicate who’s Thai or who’s Sino-Thai. Thai society is quite open to all cultures.” (Noina)

“Never, because the community and environment that I grew up in are mostly Sino-Thai. My friend group is also Sino-Thai so I never feel different from my community.” (Chompoo)

Two of the participants experienced being made fun of their appearance.

“Some people once called me “Nha Jek” (*Chinese face*), I’m not sure if this is a discrimination or just kidding. I would say it’s more on a joking side so in that case I’ve never been discriminated.” (Salee)

“Yes, when I was a kid, I used to be joking about my appearance (small eyes) but I wasn’t serious about it. I didn’t feel offended or anything. Personally, I don’t think the size of the eyes are one of the beauty standards, I don’t think that having bigger eyes are more beautiful than having smaller eyes. I never feel like having small eyes or being “Jek” is a bad thing. I see them as facts, yes, I have smaller eyes and that is not a big deal to makes me feel bad.” (Maprao)

One participant reported that she has never been discriminated in Thailand but abroad.

“Not in Thailand because there are a lot of Sino-Thai in Thai society. I am surrounded by the people who share the same family background, some are Sino-Thai or part Chinese. I am full Chinese

but I would say that's pretty similar to my friends. In the UK, I can feel the discrimination from white people.” (Tangmo)

In terms of social interaction, the majority of this group of Sino-Thai live in a nuclear family. The group that they socialize with the most is Sino-Thai which is the reason why most participants rarely experienced discrimination. In the aspect of the relationship between discrimination and acculturation strategy, several studies have shown that the experience of discrimination has an influence on the adoption of acculturation strategy and well-being of the immigrants (e.g. Berry *et al.*, 2006; Paradies, 2006; Reitz and Banerjee, 2007). The participants indicated that there are a lot of Sino-Thai in Thai society which makes them feel no difference with the community as a lot of people shared the same cultural background with them. This point indicates that they have rarely experienced discrimination and shows a positive sense of belonging in Thai society. Applying Berry's acculturation framework to the context of social interaction of this group of Sino-Thai, it appears that the sense of belonging of this group of participants is Sino-Thai which shows the integration characteristic. However, some people experienced discrimination due to appearances both in Thailand and abroad due to having Chinese heritage.

#### **4.5 Rituals and religious practices**

Ritual and religious practices can be a strong demonstration of culture (Morita, 2007, p. 125). All participants were asked regarding celebrations in Thai and Chinese festivals, religion as well as ritual practices. They were asked whether they celebrate Thai festivals. All participants thought about Songkran (Thai New Year) when it comes to Thai festivals as it is the most important occasion in Thailand. In this case, celebration covers the traditional practices on that occasion. Traditional practices on Songkran day include, for example, making merit at the temple, bathing rite for the Buddha images and pay respect to the elder family members. Two participants reported that they had a traditional ceremony on Songkran day.

“If it's Songkran day, I will also pay respect to the elders according to Thai's tradition.” (Khanon)

“(I do) bathing rite for Buddha images, pay respect to the elderly people.” (Tangmo)

Eight participants reported that they did not have any traditional ceremony on Songkran day, only celebrated in the form of having a meal with family or went travelling during this occasion.

“My family is not that traditional so we don’t really do anything special on this kind of occasion. For example, on Songkran we either go travelling or spend time with family.” (Chompoo)

“Family gathering, having a meal together but no religious practices.” (Somoh)

All participants were also asked whether they celebrate Chinese festivals. The result was all ten participants reported that they celebrate Chinese festivals like Chinese New Year, Tomb Sweeping day and Mid-Autumn festival. The participants also elaborated ceremonies and activities done on these occasions.

“On Chinese New Year, we worship ancestors, family gathering, have a meal together and giving red envelop. On Tomb sweeping day, every year we have to go to the temple and making merit. My family are stricter on this occasion more than Songkran.” (Tubtim)

“Chinese New Year: wear red T-shirt, only say good words, giving red envelope, ancestors worship both at home and deity worship, my aunt will go praying at the Chinese shrine.

Mid-Autumn festival: prepare moon cake, pray to the moon god

Tomb sweeping day: visit ancestors’ tomb and ancestor worship” (Tangmo)

“Prepare stuffs for diety worshipping. Tomb sweeping day we need to decorate the tombs but mostly my aunts and my parents will mainly be in charge of preparation.” (Khanon)

“Chinese New Year, usually my mom and my aunts will do the preparation on these occasions so I join but I don’t know how to arrange it myself. Mid-Autumn festival, I do nothing on this festival. Tomb sweeping day, we do Chinese god worshipping and ancestors worshipping.” (Mamuang)

When asked regarding religion, nine participants reported that they were Buddhists and their family and friends were also Buddhists. One participant used to be a Buddhist but she later converted to Christian. However, her friends were also Buddhists. There are some differences in details between Theravada Buddhism which is the national religion of Thailand and Mahayana Buddhism which is more popular among the overseas Chinese. Theravada Buddhism worships the Buddha but Mahayana Buddhism also worship deities. According to Coughlin (1960, p. 92), despite the difference between the Theravada and Mahayana

Buddhism, many primary values were similar for the Thai and the Chinese to recognize themselves as religiously akin. The participants reported that the difference came in terms of occasions that they would visit Thai temple and Chinese shrine. Most of the participants reported that they went to Thai temple for making merit and would visit Chinese shrine mainly for tourism purposes.

“(Making merit at) Thai temple. (Chinese shrine) I will go for travelling, more like tourist attraction.” (Salee)

“When making merit I will go to Thai temple because I’m Theravada Buddhist not a Mahayana Buddhist, I don’t get the idea of Chinese god and goddesses. I have been to a Chinese shrine but for tourism reasons. For example, I go travelling in China Town in Bangkok and stop by a famous Chinese shrine to visit.” (Mamuang)

All participants were asked regarding the wedding ceremony, all of them described that the weddings that they have attended were mixed between Thai, Chinese and Western ceremonies in one wedding. Thai part which is Thai Engagement Ceremony (Khan Maak Procession) usually starts in the morning then followed by Chinese tea ceremony. In the evening event, the Western style party will be held to celebrate the couple. When the participants were asked regarding their own wedding, which style would they choose. Most of the participants reported that they would choose the mixed style such as Thai and Chinese, Chinese and Western, Thai and Western and the mix of Thai, Chinese and Western style.

“I choose mixed style, Chinese and Thai. Because I am from a Chinese family background and my brothers’ weddings also arranged this way, it’s easier to arrange.” (Mamuang)

“I would want a mixed style one. Morning session is Chinese style, tea ceremony because it’s more like for my family. In the evening I would like to arrange Western style party because it’s mostly my friends.” (Baitoey)

“I would like to arrange the mixed one, Thai Chinese and Western but also depending on my fiancé. I want to preserve Chinese traditions. And I am technically Thai so I want to have a Thai ceremony in my wedding. Western ceremony nowadays it becomes a standard and widely used in a wedding in Thailand.” (Tangmo)

Ritual practices and religion display the acculturation between Thai and Chinese in the sense that there are influences of Thai culture and Chinese culture shows in ritual and religious practices. According to Berry’s acculturation strategies, this group of Sino-Thai demonstrates the integration characteristic in terms of ritual and religious practices.

Regarding celebration in Thai and Chinese festivals, most participants have less traditional ceremony on Thai festivals in comparison to Chinese festivals. In other words, the Chinese side has a stronger influence in the traditional ceremony. Moreover, there are similarities between ritual practices during Chinese festivals among the families of the participants. In terms of religion, most of the participants and their community are Buddhist which also displays the combination of Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism as they visit both Thai Buddhist temple and Chinese shrine but in different occasions. The wedding ceremony is a distinct example to reflect the integration characteristics of this group of Sino-Thai. They prefer to have a mixed style wedding, a combination of Thai, Chinese and Western culture. Thai ceremony represents their host culture while Chinese ceremony represents their ancestry culture. The western ceremony was selected as it is considered as a standard ceremony among Thai and Sino-Thai nowadays (Bao, 2001).

## **5. Conclusion**

Ethnic identity is the way of self-representation that an individual selects to employ in both contexts of the group they originally belonged to and a new cultural group (Sam, 2006). The study of acculturation puts an emphasis on a dual process occurring during the first-hand contact between cultures. Based on a bi-dimensional model of acculturation, the acculturation strategies proposed by Berry have been applied to examine the identity of immigrants based on two primary focuses: the degree to which they value and wish to maintain their heritage cultures and identities; and the degree to which they prefer to have contact and engage with others in the larger society (Berry and Hou, 2017, p. 30). The model proposed by Berry emphasizes the co-existence of various cultures in a society which can assist in the understanding of the acculturation process (Shafaei et al., 2016, p. 140). Thus, Berry's acculturation strategies are used in this study to contextualize and identify the complex identity of third generation overseas Chinese in Bangkok.

The main research question of this thesis regards the question of the identity of this group. The majority of the respondents perceived themselves as Sino-Thai or "*Thai Chue Sai Chin*" (*a Thai who has Chinese blood*), the combination of Thai and Chinese, which shows an integration characteristic of this group. The first reason is due to the fact that they are born and raised in Thailand but have a Chinese ancestry background. On the one hand, they are surrounded by mainly Thai culture in society. On the other hand, they are familiar with Chinese culture and customs from the family. This supports the findings by Ramsay (2001, p.



52), as cited in Morita, 2007, p. 139) which indicates that according to recent research on the overseas Chinese in Thailand, assimilation in relation to the melting pot environment in the United States has not taken place. Integration; however, has occurred in the sense that most Chinese now identify as Thai citizens, go to Thai school and have a sense of belonging in Thai society.

Another important factor that could influence an individual's identity perception is the level of exposure to the host culture and one's own culture. The factor that displays the integration characteristic of Sino-Thai is the sense of belonging in both Thai and Chinese cultures. Most respondents have a positive attitude towards Sino-Thai identity in the sense that they can enjoy traditions in both cultures. Apart from that, the sign of integration identity of the Sino-Thai displays through domains of acculturation such as language, social interaction as well as religious and ritual practices as these domains reflect cultural behavior of this subjected group. Food, on the other hand, has the most diverse and more complicated topic.

Food can be a distinct indicator of acculturation. Several works have studied on dietary acculturation of immigrants (Muhammad *et al.*, 2016; Bundy, 2017; Ramírez *et al.*, 2018). This study explores the level of acculturation through dietary in four different occasions: daily consumption, family gathering, Thai festivals and Chinese festivals. The results from the respondents show that the pattern of consumption is very diverse and varies according to occasions. From the response of the participants, it appears that among all the domains used in this study, food consumption pattern has the most complexity in terms of acculturation (Bundy, 2017, p. 1089). However, different patterns display the integration characteristic of the Sino-Thai as they have an open-minded approach towards food. That is to say that the participants enjoy variety cuisines apart from Thai and Chinese food.

Most Sino-Thai adopt Thai values, speak Thai and go to Thai schools (Morita, 2007, p. 129). Most participants of this group of Sino-Thai not only confirms this statement but also represent distinct integration characteristics. In other words, they master in the host country's language (Thai) and still be able to speak the language of own heritage (Chinese). Some of them can even speak several foreign languages which displays an open-minded attitude towards the intercultural environment.

In terms of social interaction, it appears that the sense of belonging of the participants is identified as Sino-Thai which shows the integration characteristic. They expressed the positive sense of belonging in Thai society as they have been rarely experienced discrimination.

The relation between discrimination and acculturation strategy have been elaborated on in several studies and have shown that the experience of discrimination has a negative influence on the adoption of acculturation strategy and well-being of immigrants (e.g. Berry *et al.*, 2006; Paradies, 2006; Reitz and Banerjee, 2007). Hence, it makes logical sense that this group of Sino-Thai has a strong sense of belonging in Thai society.

Ritual practices and religion show the sign of integration between Thai and Chinese in the sense that there are an influence of Thai culture and Chinese culture shown in ritual and religious practices. In terms of celebration in Thai and Chinese festivals, most participants have fewer traditional ceremonies on Thai festivals in comparison to Chinese festivals. In other words, the Chinese side has a stronger influence in the traditional ceremonies. The wedding ceremony is a distinct example which reflects the integration characteristics of the participants. They prefer to have a mixed style wedding which is a combination of Thai, Chinese and Western culture.

The findings of this thesis contradict Skinner's prediction of total assimilation of the Chinese in Thailand that the Chinese will eventually be assimilated into Thai society and become homogenous. Firstly, this group of Sino-Thai perceives themselves as "*Thai Chue Sai Chin*" (*a Thai who has Chinese blood*), an integration characteristic of both Thai and Chinese. Secondly, based on all domains, it is evident that this group of Sino-Thai belongs to the integration category because they absorb the host country's culture while still strongly maintain and preserve ancestry culture and traditions. This study thus proves solid evidence that there is a co-existence of both Thai and Chinese cultures in a multicultural urban setting like Bangkok. The Sino-Thai, who is descendant of the Chinese, have a sense of belonging in Thai society but also maintain the Chinese cultural traits. Several distinct signs of integration display through the open-minded attitudes towards food choices, language, social interaction and ritual and religious ceremonies of this group of Sino-Thai.

It is crucial to remark that this study only focuses on a group of people that shared a similar background in the sense that they are Sino-Thai, born and raised in Thailand but have Chinese ancestry, university graduated and living in urban settings. Therefore, the findings of this thesis may not be able to generalize all Chinese diaspora groups in Thailand. However, the suggestion for future research could be to further explore comparisons between acculturation patterns of the Chinese diaspora and Chinese communities in other regions of Thailand as well as explore the difference in terms of characteristics and cultural adaptation patterns of the Chinese diaspora in different settings such as educational background or social class. Even though there are several studies on Chinese diaspora in Thailand, very few has a



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## Appendix

### Interview Questions

In general, do you feel more Thai or Chinese? Or Both? Why?

Have you ever been bullied or discriminated because of the Chinese heritage? If yes, in what way? For example, have you been treated differently when you were a kid, or even now, if yes, in what way?

Do you perceived that being Chinese/having Chinese ancestry can be used to your advantage? How?

How do you feel having a Chinese heritage?

Are there certain situations or contexts in which you identify more as Thai, and others more as Chinese?

Do you have a feeling that Thai people consider you as Thai? That Chinese people consider you Chinese?

Do you feel different from the person who comes from a Thai family?

Do you think where in Thai society/hierarchy that Sino-Thai will fit in?

How many and what languages do you speak?

Can you speak Chinese?

Do you have a Chinese name?

Do you really use it? If you use it, in what contexts do you use it?

When and why do you start learning Chinese?

What do you think is a benefit of knowing Chinese? How will it benefit you?

Do you live in an extended family or a nuclear family?

Do you celebrate Thai festival? What do you do on these occasions?

Do you celebrate Chinese festival? What do you do on these occasions?

Do you prefer to eat Thai food, Chinese food or other types of food in these following occasions? And Why?

-Daily consumption

-Family gathering

-Thai festivals

-Chinese festivals

About social interaction, in your life, what kind of people that you interact to the most? Thai, Chinese or Sino-Thai?

What about religion aspects?

Have you been to funeral or wedding in Thailand?

What kind of arrangements do they usually have? Thai, Chinese or mixed?

If you have a wedding which type will you choose?