



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Research Commons

<https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/>

Research Commons at the University of Waikato

Copyright Statement:

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

The thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of the thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from the thesis.

**An Appreciative Inquiry into the Promoting and Capitalising Chinese Executive
Leadership within Aotearoa New Zealand**

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of
Master of Management Studies in Waikato Management School
at
The University of Waikato
by
Yiling Liu



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

2025

Abstract

While a number of New Zealand organisations have demonstrated genuine commitment to fostering diversity and inclusion, particularly for Māori and Pasifika peoples, individuals of Chinese ethnicity remain significantly under-represented in senior executive teams and on boards of directors. In light of New Zealand's ongoing inability to harness the potential contributions of this community, the country has not been fully able to benefit from its truly diverse and globally connected workforce.

The literature reviewed the history of the Chinese diaspora, with a particular focus on migration patterns in Aotearoa New Zealand. It also examined the contemporary Chinese community's demographics, educational backgrounds, and workplace experiences. Existing research has shown that, despite the significant contributions Chinese communities have made to New Zealand society, they continue to face barriers, particularly in advancing to senior leadership positions.

This thesis aimed to explore the distinctive qualities of leaders with Chinese heritage and to recognise the contributions they have made to New Zealand society. It sought to promote the visibility of Chinese leaders in the corporate environment and to understand both the barriers they may have faced and the key enablers in advancing to executive roles.

This qualitative research study utilised semi-structured interviews conducted with current or former senior leaders with Chinese heritage, enabled participants to reflect on their leadership experiences. The findings revealed how cultural background, upbringing, and lived experiences shaped their perspectives and leadership styles. Although these Chinese leaders had attained senior leadership positions, many described encountering systemic barriers that limited their recognition and progression within the predominantly Anglo-Saxon leadership frameworks in New Zealand. Nevertheless, the findings also revealed that leaders with Chinese heritage have been able to bring meaningful value to New Zealand through inclusive leadership practices, international business connections, and cross-cultural insight.

By focusing on leaders of Chinese heritage, this study addressed a critical gap in the existing literature on ethnic diversity in leadership, particularly within the New Zealand context. It emphasised the need for more inclusive leadership models and coordinated efforts from government, organisations, educational institutions, and individuals to create a more equitable

and representative society that promotes greater leadership opportunities for people of all ethnic backgrounds.

Keywords: Overseas Chinese, leadership experiences, cultural identity, Aotearoa New Zealand, ethnic diversity, workplace inclusion, senior leadership.

Acknowledgement

As the proverb goes, “It takes a village to raise a child.” This thesis was never a solo effort. From the very beginning of my Master’s journey, I encountered challenges at almost every stage—choosing papers, selecting a topic, applying for scholarships, navigating visa changes, and preparing and completing this thesis. Nothing was laid out for me in advance. It was through countless conversations, sleepless nights, and support from many people and departments across the university that this work became possible. It is truly a collective effort.

I would first like to thank Andrea Perry, who has always been there to listen, without judgment, just with pure compassion and a willingness to help. You were the person who invited me to take the first step on this journey. I will always be grateful for that one phone call that led me here.

My sincere thanks also go to Kelly Hare and her team at the School of Graduate Research at the University of Waikato. Through her leadership and team effort, I was fortunate to receive a research scholarship that made it possible for me to continue this work, something I could not have done otherwise.

I would like to thank my student visa adviser auntie Lu, a trustworthy and dependable person who supported me through times of uncertainty. Whenever I needed help, she was always there for me.

My appreciation also goes to Stuart Dillon, Head of School at the Waikato Management School, for recognising my potential and offered me a part-time role when I needed it most. That opportunity supported me financially and allowed me to complete this project.

Thank you to Joel Hall, my dear friend, who read through parts of my thesis and offered thoughtful insights. Through our friendship, I’ve come to understand that real connections transcend age, time, and distance. Your support gave me the strength to pursue this journey knowing that a good friend is always there. Though we’ve grown in different ways, we’ve never grown apart.

To all the interview participants, I sincerely thank you for generously sharing your time and insights with me. Your vision and stories have not only enriched this research but also offered inspiration for future generations of Chinese leaders in New Zealand.

Lastly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Professor Brad Jackson. No words can truly capture how thankful I am for your unwavering support over the years. Through your guidance and wisdom, I have reached this milestone. You have been a mentor, a leader, a teacher, and most importantly a trusted friend I have always felt safe to turn to and trust the most.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis and my whole heart to two places I love and call home, places that have shaped who I am through connection, memories, and growth.

First, to my motherland, China—the land of prosperity. China nurtured me with values of kindness, the courage to explore, and the spirit of dedication. It is the place where my roots were formed and where my journey began.

Second, to Aotearoa New Zealand—the land of opportunity. It is here that I have spent the most time in the past decade and where I learnt the importance of resilience, happiness, and equality. The people, experiences, and challenges I encountered in this land have deeply shaped my worldview and strengthened my sense of purpose.

I also dedicate this work to my ancestors, those who came before us and sacrificed so much to create better lives for future generations. It is through their strength, struggle, and love that we enjoy the opportunities we have today.

Both of my parents have played a significant role in shaping who I am today. Growing up in a household with a mix of protective and demanding parenting styles, I became someone who is both compassionate and determined. I often doubt myself, yet I carry a deep sense of hope. I hope that what I've achieved through this thesis reflects the kind of life you believe to be meaningful and good. More than anything, I hope I've made you proud.

List of Figures

Figure 1: Timeline of Chinese immigrants' movement in the globe	8
Figure 2: PRC Chinese migration to New Zealand 1992-1998	16
Figure 3: Chinese in New Zealand 1867-2006	17
Figure 4: Percentage of population by five-year age group, Chinese and Total New Zealand population ethnic groups, 2023 Census	19

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgement	iv
Dedication.....	vi
List of Figures.....	vii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
1.1 Research Motivation	1
1.2 Research Background	2
1.3 Research Purpose and Research Questions.....	4
1.4 Thesis Structure	6
Chapter Two: Literature Review	7
2.1 The Chinese Overseas.....	7
2.1.1 The Meaning of Chinese Overseas	8
2.1.2 The Chinese Overseas Population across the Globe.....	10
2.1.3 Phases of the Chinese Settlement in New Zealand.....	13
2.1.4 The Contemporary Chinese Community in New Zealand.....	18
2.1.5 The Experience of Chinese in New Zealand Labour Market	21
2.2 The Distinctive Nature of Chinese People.....	23
2.2.1 The GLOBE Project Analysis of Confucian Chinese Countries	25
2.3 Chinese Leadership Behaviours.....	34
2.3.1 The Implicit Leadership Theory and the GLOBE Leadership Study	34
2.3.2 The Interaction Between Chinese Leaders and Their Team.....	36
2.4 Chapter Summary	43
Chapter Three: Methodology	45
3.1 Research Philosophy.....	45
3.1.1 Appreciative Inquiry	45
3.1.2 Interpretivism and Qualitative Study	46
3.2 Research Design.....	47
3.2.1 Interview Questions	47
3.2.2 Data Collection Method.....	50
3.2.3 Participant Recruitment and Ethical Considerations	51

3.2.4 Data Analysis	54
3.3 Chapter Summary	55
Chapter Four: Findings	57
4.1 Upbringing and Career Background	57
4.2 Values and Leadership style	62
4.2.1 Hard Work Does Pay Off.....	63
4.2.2 Teamwork is Dreamwork	65
4.2.3 Put Yourself in Someone else's Shoes	68
4.2.4 Gold Will Always Shine	70
4.2.5 I am Who I am	72
4.3 Challenges and Outcomes.....	74
4.3.1 Experience with Identities.....	75
4.3.2 Difference Creates Misunderstanding.....	77
4.3.3 Is New Zealand Ready?	86
4.4 Contributions and Opportunities for Greater Chinese Executive Leadership	93
4.4.1 You Cannot Be What You Don't See	94
4.4.2 The Power of Diversity	96
4.4.3 Valued for Who They Are	98
4.4.4 Cultural Insight Needed for Growth	102
4.4.5 Opportunity Ahead for Greater Inclusion.....	104
4.5 Chapter Summary	106
Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion	109
5.1 Insights into Research Findings	109
5.1.1 How Does Chinese Heritage Influence New Zealand Executives' Leadership Thinking and Practice?	109
5.1.2 What Are the Opportunities and Constraints for Advancing Executive Leadership in New Zealand With Chinese Heritage?.....	115
5.2 Theoretical Contribution and Practical Implications	121
5.2.1 Academic Contributions	121
5.2.2 Practical Implications.....	125
5.3 Research Limitations	136
5.3.1 Lack of Richness in the Data	136
5.3.2 Reliance on a Colonial Framework of Leadership	138

5.3.3 Researcher Vulnerability and Emotional Entanglement.....	140
5.4 Personal Reflection	141
5.5 Chapter Summary	142
References.....	144
Appendices.....	153

Chapter One: Introduction

This introductory chapter provides an overview of the thesis. It begins by outlining the primary research objective and the background that shaped the direction and design of the study. The chapter then introduces the structure of the thesis and explains the rationale behind how it has been organised.

1.1 Research Motivation

I moved to New Zealand on my own shortly after turning 21 years old, uncertain of what the future would hold. Like many young travellers, I was driven by a desire to explore, learn, and experience as much life as I could. Over time, I travelled to nearly every major town across the country, encountering people from vastly different backgrounds. I was struck by how lives intersect in this distant corner of the world, often by chance, and felt a sense of wonder at how strangers are brought together through shared time and place.

Two years later, I enrolled in an undergraduate degree at the University of Waikato. At the time, my only goal was to complete each paper and earn my degree. As a mature student with no prior academic experience in New Zealand, I worked hard and stayed focused. I remember that I rarely had a full day off; my time was filled with lectures, assignments, and part-time work. In my final year of study, I was invited to become a tutor, and that opportunity changed everything. Teaching has since become a significant part of my life. It has shaped how I see myself, how I relate to others, and how I understand the dynamics of New Zealand society. My classroom experiences, especially while tutoring the course Intercultural Perspectives, prompted me to reflect on the ways that diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are approached in Aotearoa. While many New Zealand-born students are open and friendly, I noticed that some tended to treat DEI topics as abstract or less important. This, combined with my own experiences, such as struggling to make local friends, finding it difficult to get job interviews, or receiving a side glance at the supermarket checkout, made me realise that beneath New Zealand's friendly surface, there are still systemic barriers for those who do not "look the part".

After completing my bachelor's degree, I continued tutoring and became Head Tutor for the introductory leadership course. That was how I met Brad, who later became my thesis supervisor. I always knew I wanted to pursue higher education, but I also knew I needed the

right reason to do so. Conversations with Brad helped me return to my “why”—to live, to feel, and to contribute something meaningful. When I shared my desire to write about "Chinese" in New Zealand, he asked me a question I vaguely remember: "Are you angry about this?" That question became the seed of this thesis, which focuses on the promotion and recognition of leaders with Chinese heritage in New Zealand.

As someone of Chinese descent, I am personally invested in understanding the extent of under-representation of Chinese leaders in New Zealand’s corporate landscape. I want to explore not just the causes of this under-representation but also how New Zealand organisations can benefit from the distinctive leadership qualities that individuals from Chinese cultures bring. Through reflection, I have come to recognise that my own leadership style differs from many of my colleagues who grew up in Aotearoa. I tend to be more performance-driven and have higher expectations from my students. I am also more inclined to follow rules that ensure fairness and reduce uncertainty. These tendencies are shaped by both my cultural background and my values. Rather than seeing these differences as a disadvantage, I believe my Chinese heritage offer a valuable alternative approach to leadership, one that deserves to be recognised and better understood within the New Zealand context.

This thesis is both an academic project and a personal journey. It reflects my hope that New Zealand continues to grow into a truly inclusive society that not only welcomes cultural diversity but also recognises and values the leadership potential that comes from it. In completing this research, I hope to honour the generations who came before me, my ancestors who made sacrifices to create a more stable and dignified life for people of Chinese heritage across different times and spaces, including myself. I also hope to contribute, in my own way, as a Chinese person to this country I have come to love and call home. On a personal level, this work is deeply connected to my desire to give back to society, a value that has been instilled in me by my family.

1.2 Research Background

In recent years, the issue of under-representation of ethnic minority groups, particularly in leadership roles, has become a focal point in conversations around DEI. This concern is especially relevant in Aotearoa New Zealand, a country that prides itself on cultural diversity and social inclusivity. Despite ongoing efforts made by both the public and private sectors to

foster inclusive workplaces, there remains a notable absence of leaders of Chinese heritage in senior leadership positions.

Although the under-representation of Chinese in leaderships exists across both public and private sectors, this research chose to focus specifically on the private corporate sector. One reason for this focus is the perceived influence of public pressure and affirmative action in public institutions, which may at times lead to leadership appointments based on ethnicity rather than merit. By contrast, corporate leadership roles are generally associated with performance-based metrics and market-driven results, making it more feasible to examine the effectiveness and contributions of leaders of Chinese heritage based on their business outcomes. This focus also aligns with my personal and academic interests as a business student seeking to understand and one day navigate the New Zealand corporate environment. I was particularly interested in understanding what it takes for Chinese individuals to succeed in senior leadership roles.

However, it is important to note that the lack of Chinese representation is not limited to the corporate sector. At the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), for instance, despite Asian staff making up nearly 25% of the workforce, only one person of Asian descent holds a Tier 1–3 leadership position (Bonnett, 2024). In trying to understand the extent of under-representation in New Zealand's corporate landscape, I manually reviewed the executive leadership and board composition of all NZX50-listed companies. Among the more than 700 individuals listed, only 14 appeared to be of Chinese descent based on their names, representing approximately 2% of the total compared to the 5% proportion of Chinese people in New Zealand's general population (Stats NZ, n.d.). This striking under-representation further motivated me to explore the lived experiences of Chinese leaders in New Zealand and to understand the historical, cultural, and structural factors that may influence their presence in senior roles. My hope is to contribute to broader conversations about how to reimagine and reshape New Zealand's inclusion efforts, so they better reflect and support the diversity of its population.

This research is also mindful of the political sensitivities surrounding the term “Chinese”. In global and local contexts, this label can be interpreted in various ways, sometimes as a national identity, other times as an ethnic or cultural affiliation. In particular, tensions between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (Taiwan) have made the use of this term politically charged. While Taiwan operates independently and many Taiwanese

people do not identify as Chinese nationals, it remains true that both regions share a deep-rooted cultural heritage, with around 97% of Taiwan's population being ethnically Han Chinese (the same ethnic majority group in the PRC) (Minority Rights Group International, 2020). Moreover, despite the significant political, economic, and ideological divide between Hong Kong, Macau and PRC, it is inaccurate to refer to Chinese living in those region as overseas Chinese or members of the Chinese diaspora (Li & Li, 2013). China has formally adopted the concept of "one China, two systems" in order to acknowledge the distinctions between mainland China (a term is often used to distinguish the territory under the PRC control from other Chinese territories, like Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan) and Hong Kong while upholding national sovereignty (So, 2011).

Therefore, in this thesis, the term "Chinese" or "Chinese overseas" is used in an ethnic and cultural sense rather than a political or national one. It is intended to be inclusive of people with Chinese ancestry regardless of their country of origin, including the PRC, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, Singapore, Malaysia, and beyond. It comprises first-generation Chinese immigrants who may have left China but have settled abroad, as well as Chinese immigrant descendants who may have completely integrated into local society. Throughout the thesis, the terms "Chinese leaders" and "leaders with Chinese heritage" are used interchangeably, with the understanding that they refer to cultural background rather than political allegiance or nationality.

1.3 Research Purpose and Research Questions

This research is motivated by a desire to address the significant underrepresentation of individuals with Chinese heritage in senior leadership positions within New Zealand's corporate sector. This absence not only highlights potential systemic barriers within organisational and societal structures but also represents a missed opportunity to fully leverage the diverse leadership talent that exists in Aotearoa. From both a business and societal standpoint, recognising and capitalising culturally diverse leadership is critical to building inclusive and high-performing organisations. Leaders with Chinese heritage may bring distinctive leadership styles and values that are often overlooked or undervalued in mainstream models of leadership selection. By exploring how these qualities are received in the New

Zealand context, this research aims to support a better understanding and appreciation of the leadership potential within Chinese communities.

Guided by an appreciative inquiry approach, the study sought to acknowledge and learn from the positive contributions Chinese leaders had already made to New Zealand. This approach aimed to imagine a future in which their talents are more widely recognised, and their potential more fully harnessed. In line with the research purpose of capitalising and promoting leaders with Chinese heritage in New Zealand, this study focuses on Chinese individuals who have already assumed senior leadership roles in large organisations. By concentrating on those who have attained executive positions, the study aims to uncover what can be learned from their lived experiences, the strategies they employed, and the challenges they encountered along the way. These leaders have been recognised as effective by their organisations through board appointments, promotions, or public acknowledgement, so their contributions can be meaningfully examined within a systemic framework.

Studying this group also allows for deeper insight into how Chinese leadership styles operate in real-world corporate contexts and how such leadership approaches are recognised and supported in New Zealand. It also allows for the identification of patterns, practices, and that could inform pathways for future Chinese professionals. Ultimately, the aim is not only to highlight the leadership contributions of those who have succeeded but also to open up the conversation about how many more could succeed if given the right recognition and support.

To guide the inquiry, the research is driven by two primary questions

1. How does Chinese heritage influence New Zealand executives' leadership thinking and practice?
2. What are the opportunities and constraints for advancing executive leadership in New Zealand for individuals with Chinese heritage?

These questions shaped the development of the interview framework, which was designed to explore how Chinese leaders make sense of their leadership identity, how cultural heritage informs their behaviour, and how their leadership is perceived within organisational environments.

1.4 Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into five chapters that provide a thorough description of each stage of the research project. Chapter One introduces the background and purpose of the study, including both my personal motivation and the wider academic rationale for promoting leadership with Chinese heritage in New Zealand. It also outlines the two primary research questions that guided the study: (1) How does Chinese heritage influence the leadership thinking and practices of New Zealand executives? and (2) What are the opportunities and constraints for advancing executive leadership in New Zealand for individuals with Chinese heritage?

Chapter Two presents a review of the relevant literature. It explores existing studies on Chinese leadership and provides a historical overview of the Chinese overseas, including patterns of migration and settlement in New Zealand. This chapter also draws on secondary data to examine the current educational and economic status of Chinese New Zealanders and reviews literature on Chinese leadership in non-Chinese and Anglo-Saxon contexts.

Chapter Three outlines the research methodology. It explains the choice of qualitative research design, using appreciative inquiry and semi-structured interviews. The chapter also describes the research process, including participant recruitment, data collection, ethical considerations, and the approach to data analysis.

Chapter Four presents the research findings according to key themes that emerged from the interviews. These findings address the two main research questions, exploring the values and leadership behaviours of participants, the challenges they faced in their career progression, and the contributions they have made and can make. This chapter also discusses systemic barriers to inclusion and recognition; at the end highlights how Chinese leadership values can enrich New Zealand's corporate landscape.

Chapter Five offers a discussion of the findings and the academic and practical implications. It reflects on how the insights gained contribute to broader conversations about leadership, cultural inclusion, and diversity. Finally, the chapter concludes the study by outlining its limitations and suggesting directions for future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter presents secondary research that was conducted across three key areas to support a deeper understanding of Chinese communities in New Zealand and Chinese leadership in a global context. It begins by exploring the history of the Chinese overseas, providing background on their patterns of migration and the motivations behind their relocation. This is followed by a closer look at the specific context of Chinese settlement in New Zealand, including relevant statistics that help illustrate the experiences of the contemporary Chinese community, such as where they live, their demographic profiles, income levels, and educational attainment.

The second section of this chapter examines the existing research-based frameworks commonly used to understand Chinese cultural values. In particular, it discusses how traditional philosophies, such as Confucianism, have shaped Chinese cultural thinking, and introduces broader frameworks like the GLOBE project that have been used to interpret these cultural influences.

The final section focuses on the concept of Chinese leadership, reviewing existing literature that examines how Chinese leadership is practiced and perceived in various global contexts. This section also looks at research that has examined how Chinese leadership interacts with other cultural norms and how it impacts non-Chinese subordinates.

2.1 The Chinese Overseas

To better capture the experiences of Chinese individuals living outside their home country, it is important to first explore the dynamics of Chinese migration, beginning with an analysis of relevant statistical data. This part of literature review will explore the concept of “Chinese overseas” and the timelines of Chinese emigration population across the globe. Furthermore, we will delve deeper by examining the history of Chinese overseas within the New Zealand context in the past and present, with tables and figures in highlighting the population growth, education, professional background and the contribution of Chinese overseas in New Zealand society.

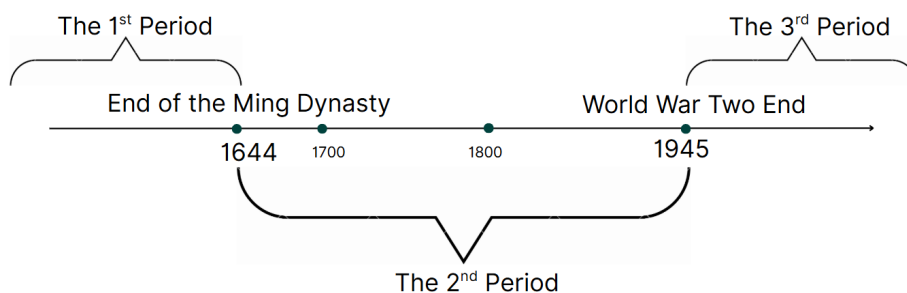
2.1.1 The Meaning of Chinese Overseas

It is widely accepted that China is one of the oldest civilisations with a long history of 5,000 years. The establishment of Xia Dynasty, which is seen as the beginning of Chinese society, emerged approximately in 2100 BC (Kong, 2007). This long historical trajectory has enabled the development of a rich and diverse culture, shaped by the interactions of numerous ethnic groups. Throughout the centuries, China has served as a melting pot, fostering continuous cultural exchange and integration. Today, the country officially recognises 56 ethnic groups, with the Han population accounting for approximately 91% of the total (China Highlights, n.d.). Over generations, many minority groups have gradually blended aspects of their cultural identities with those of the Han majority, contributing to a shared sense of Chinese identity and collective memory.

Chinese people who have migrated overseas have brought unique perspectives and cultural practices to other countries. Their influence has become increasingly noticeable around the world due to the growing size of the Chinese diaspora (Li & Li, 2013). The term used to describe Chinese people who live overseas has changed through different time. Understanding these terminologies involves exploring the history of Chinese migration and the geopolitical changes that have influenced these movements. Appreciating context helps to clarify the evolution of the terms and the reasons behind these changes over time.

Wang's framework (see Figure 1) divides the Chinese emigration timeline into three historical periods on the basis of the changing aspirations of those who ventured outside China (2000, as cited in Li & Li, 2013).

Figure 1: Timeline of Chinese immigrants' movement in the globe



The first period covers from the beginning of Xia Dynasty until the fall of the Ming Dynasty. This is when China was preoccupied by its internal issues associated with governing its vast territory and gave little attention to the countries around it (Wang, 2000, as cited in Li & Li, 2013). Due to an insufficient understanding of the necessity of interaction with its surrounding countries, restraints on transportation, and a high degree of self-sufficiency in goods, not many Chinese people travelled outside China. By the time China had realised the need for global trade, many countries were already under the influence of Western control.

The second period started from the seventeenth until the end of World War Two. In the early stages of migration, Chinese sojourners who left their homeland for various reasons were often viewed as outcasts. They were expected to remain loyal to China and maintain traditional Chinese ways of living, with the intention of eventually returning home. (Wang, 2000, as cited in Li & Li, 2013). After 1900, many overseas Chinese were no longer seen as disloyal subjects by the Chinese authority, many of whom were seen as hardworking and patriotic. The term “huaqiao” meaning Chinese sojourners who live overseas first appeared in the late Qing dynasty (1644-1911). The term assumes a positive connotation of Chinese overseas who are loyal supporters of China and have the intention to come back. However, many sojourners especially in Southeast Asia adopted local living by intermarrying local women. The battle over the mind and heart among overseas Chinese continued throughout the uncertain political and economic changes in China during this period. At this time in Australasia and America, the Chinese migrants were forced to live a marginal life due to discrimination (Ip, 2013).

The third period began after World War Two and the Civil War in China. This was a time when the political environment was vastly changing both within and outside China (Wang, 2000, as cited in Li & Li, 2013). First, with the establishment of control by the Communist Party in China, which initiated many radical political movements; combined with the advancement of multiculturalism in other countries where overseas Chinese had gained civil rights, returning to China did not seem like a preferable option at that time. During this period, many Chinese overseas adapted to the local way of living, and many of them no longer desired to return to China. Chinese minorities in various countries developed mixed forms of identity that bear different proximity to Chinese culture without necessarily maintaining an affinity toward the political regime of China.

From the third period, the term “huaqiao”, or Chinese sojourners, has become untenable or inaccurate as a way of describing those Chinese who migrated overseas since this term sets the

overseas Chinese apart from their adopted countries and communities. The term "haiwai huaqiao," meaning Chinese overseas, was widely used to refer to those of Chinese descent who have acquired citizenship outside China. This term recognises that many Chinese immigrants and their descendants have permanently settled outside China and formed multilayered identities (Wang, 2000, as cited in Li & Li, 2013). In addition, the term "Chinese diaspora" has begun to be used as a substitute for the term "Chinese overseas," with sometimes imprecise boundaries. Both terms can refer to ethnic Chinese living outside China who may or may not have been born in China (Li & Li, 2013).

2.1.2 The Chinese Overseas Population across the Globe

The following section will focus on the growth of overseas Chinese from the 1950s, as it is the most relevant data in discussing the context of this research. Many studies have gathered and analysed data on the population of Chinese overseas (e.g. Li & Li, 2013; Poston & Wong, 2016; Wu, 2024). The statistics are primarily drawn from the Overseas Community Affairs Council, Taiwan. This organisation was founded in 1929 in Canton (now known as Guangdong) with the aim of acting as a bridge for informational, cultural, educational, and economic contacts between Taiwan and people of Taiwanese and Chinese heritage living abroad. Its purview extends beyond Taiwanese expatriates to encompass any ethnic Chinese residing abroad (Overseas Community Affairs Council, 2021).

Li & Li (2013) gathered data primarily from the yearbook of the Overseas Community Affairs Commission. These data include the actual numbers of Chinese overseas listed by region between 1955 to 2009 as well as projected data until 2040 (see Appendix A1). Moreover, their study also demonstrates the percentage distribution of the actual and projected Chinese overseas population by region during the same period (see Appendix A2). For data after 2009, Wu (2024) gathered information from numerous sources, including the Overseas Community Affairs Council. Appendix A3 demonstrates the overseas Chinese population in 2010 and 2022 across different continents.

To better illustrate this growth across different regions, data from both research (excluding projected data) have been combined into a new table and a line chart illustrate the population of Chinese overseas from 1955 to 2022 (Wu, 2024; Li & Li, 2013) (see Appendix A4). According to the combined data, Asia (excluding China) has been home to the majority of

overseas Chinese since 1955, with the population growing from 11.07 million to 34.62 million by 2022. Following Asia, the largest overseas Chinese populations are found in America (9.77 million), Europe (2.38 million), Oceania (1.77 million), and Africa (1.18 million).

1955-1970: Political Turmoil at Home and Hostility Abroad

Between 1955 and 1980, the growth of the Chinese overseas population showed a steadier increase compared to the following 50 years. The political environment in PRC was not stable under Mao's government for a long time after the establishment of the new country in 1949 (Teiwes, 2019). Social movements such as the Land Reform, the Great Leap Forward, the Great Chinese Famine and the Cultural Revolution brought enormous cultural and economic repression to the Chinese people. In many ways, these significant historical events in PRC constrained new Chinese emigration. During that time, China was one of the poorest countries in the world, many Chinese citizens were simply unable or not encouraged to leave the country. Meanwhile, the overseas Chinese who arrived in Southeast Asia prior to 1949 faced challenges in their local communities due to racial or ideological differences (Li & Li, 2013). In 1955, the majority of overseas Chinese resided in Southeast Asia, making up 96.5% of the total overseas Chinese population. Countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia accounted for the top four destinations for overseas Chinese, a trend originally encouraged by China's imperial expansion and trade relations during Qing dynasty (Kuhu, 2009).

1970-2000: Economic Reform Spurs Migration to the West

The turning point for China came with the reform and opening up in 1976. After Mao's death in 1978, Deng Xiaoping led China to achieve what became known as an "economic miracle" (Liu, 2022). A distinctive economic ideology began to develop, with China promoting socialism with Chinese characteristics and allowing foreign capital to invest heavily in port cities like Shenzhen and Guangzhou. This encouraged many people from the coastal regions to leave China for more industrialised countries, such as the U.S. or Canada, in search of a better life (Wu, 2014). As illustrated in Appendix A2, the Chinese overseas increased significantly in America, the proportion tripled from 4.7% in 1970 to 14% by 2000. During this period, it was recognised that people living in Hong Kong and Macau were no longer classified as Chinese overseas due to the change in the definition of China after the country regained sovereignty over Hong Kong and Macau in 1997 and 1999, respectively (Li & Li, 2013).

2000-2024: Global Expansion Amidst Political Shifts

Since the year 2000, the overseas Chinese population has grown exponentially, increasing from 35.05 million to 49.72 million in 2022, a growth of approximately 42%. The population growth was largely driven by a significant increase in new migrants from mainland China (Li, 2023). Over the past twenty-five years, both China and many other countries have experienced a series of major social, political, and economic shifts. These constant and sometimes unpredictable changes have created a dynamic and often turbulent period. This environment has shaped migration patterns and contributed to the rising number of Chinese migrants settling abroad.

Since Xi Jinping came to power in 2013, various measures have accelerated economic and technological development, while also highlighting his firm political philosophy (Li, 2023). Since China established the One Belt, One Road initiative in 2013 (replicating the Silk Road from the mid-15th century), the number of Chinese immigrants in the Middle East and Africa has expanded dramatically, with most settling in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE (Wu, 2024). The initiative also expanded to Africa; the overseas Chinese population in Africa has increased from 0.14 million in 2000 to 1.18 million in 2022. This was primarily a result of China's remarkable growth in trade and political relations with African countries during the last decade or so. China's trading with Africa totalled \$114 billion in 2010, up from \$10 billion in 2000 and \$1 billion in 1980. In 2010, Chinese corporations accounted for 40% of all corporate contracts signed in African countries, compared to 2% for American firms (Wang, 2023). China's substantial investments and infrastructure projects in Africa have created a large number of opportunities for Chinese workers, professionals, and businesses.

At the same time, the centralised power that Xi Jinping holds in China has created tensions, contributing to the fact that many Chinese people have been eager to leave the country. One of the most significant movements that catalysed the departure of the Second-Generation Reds (i.e. Children of Chinese political elites) is Xi Jinping's campaign against corruption (Reuters, 2022). When Xi took power, he launched a historic effort to root out corruption within the Communist Party. This campaign has been popular among the public and has also served as an effective tool for removing political opponents. Many officials sent their children overseas as protection, hoping that they would not be affected by the potential downfall of their power. In addition, the state is increasingly taking the economic lead in both the private and public sectors, making the business environment in China more challenging to navigate, especially for large

organisations. This has led some business owners to explore investment migration to other countries, particularly in Europe and Oceania.

The enactment of the Hong Kong National Security Law in 2020, following the 2019 to 2020 protests, has been a pivotal political development. This law caused Hong Kong to lose its former self-governing status, triggering a significant wave of emigration, especially after the UK introduced a new passport program for British Nationals Overseas (BNO) holders in January 2021 (Wu, 2024). Additionally, escalating tensions between Taiwan and PRC have influenced immigration trends and created divisions within overseas Chinese communities. The Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1995–1996 led to substantial emigration from Taiwan, a pattern that reappeared on a smaller scale in 2023, just before the 2024 presidential election. With the election of Taiwan's President Lai and his pro-sovereignty party, these tensions are likely to persist, further shaping the Chinese diaspora (Wu, 2024). These political shifts have had a profound impact on the dynamics of Chinese communities globally.

Arguably, another factor that has influenced Chinese emigration was the COVID-19 global pandemic (Wu, 2024). China closed its borders and limited trade for nearly three years, and the strict quarantine measures further widened the gap between the rich and poor within China. Although life in China can be quite convenient for many Chinese, especially with advanced technology supporting nearly every aspect of daily living, many still chose to leave due to misalignment with the political ideology of the Communist Party. From my personal experience, the conflict between personal opinions and national policies, and the choice to leave China, does not necessarily reflect a lack of loyalty for the homeland. Many Chinese people left in search of a better life, but most still hold a strong identity as Chinese and hope to bring positive change to their homeland or local communities. The communist party has been in power in China for less than 80 years, yet it is the thousands of years of cultural and historical heritage that significantly shape the collective identity of the Chinese. This identity represents who Chinese truly are with shared values and memories.

2.1.3 Phases of the Chinese Settlement in New Zealand

In the previous discussion, we have examined the significance of Chinese overseas globally to understand the overarching trends and factors that influenced Chinese migration. This section will explore the history of Chinese migrants in the New Zealand context, aiming to understand

their reasons for coming and their motivations for staying from a historical perspective. Like many other migrant countries, New Zealand is no exception in being home for many Chinese overseas. The Chinese have long been living in the "land of the long white cloud," arriving not long after the Western settlers began to set foot on this land. The timeline of Chinese settlement in New Zealand can be summarised in four phases based on the changes in aspirations of the Chinese people.

Phase 1: 1842-1899 The Early Settler

The period began with the arrival of the first Chinese immigrant, who was believed to have landed in Nelson in 1842, followed by an influx of gold miners after 1866, continuing until around 1900 (France, 2013). The New Zealand gold rush attracted people from all over the world, including Chinese migrants who were seeking fortunes. Chinese workers were invited by the Otago Provincial Council in 1865 to work in the goldfields. Most of these individuals came from Guangdong, a region affected by overpopulation and poor governance under the imperial system. At the time, Guangdong was a treaty port created as the result of the Opium War (1856-1860). That prompted many Chinese men to leave in search of better opportunities and many initially went to Australia before arriving in Otago (Ip, 2013). Most Chinese miners left their homes reluctantly, viewing their migration as an opportunity to earn money with the hope of one day returning to China, where many had left behind their wives and children.

By 1871, around 2,600 Chinese people were living in New Zealand, most of whom had come for gold mining and this number increased to 5,000 in 1881 (Ritchie, 2023). Since Australia and New Zealand were British colonies, the Chinese, as the first non-European settlers, faced prejudice. The legislation and attitudes towards non-white settlers in New Zealand were heavily influenced by Australia. In both countries, there was increasing anti-Chinese legislation aimed at preventing Chinese people from settling and integrating into local communities (Ip, 1995). The Chinese population declined due to the diminishing gold in the goldfields and rising discrimination by non-Chinese New Zealanders. With the implementation of anti-Chinese laws in New Zealand, such as the Poll Tax, there was a significant decline in the Chinese population, reducing it to only around 2,800 by 1900 (Ritchie, 2023).

Phase 2 :1900-1948 Exclusion and Survival

In the second phase, from 1900 until the establishment of the PRC in 1949, the Chinese who came to New Zealand or chose to stay there had aspirations that were quite different to the gold

miners who arrived in the mid-19th century. From 1900, with the gradual abandonment of the goldfields due to declining yields, many of those who had come as miners faced the decision to either leave, move into other occupations, or die (Ritchie, 2023).

Initially, there were very few Chinese women or children in the country, largely due to the heavy financial burden of the Poll Tax. Each Chinese person arriving in New Zealand was required to pay £100, which was equivalent to around NZD \$20,000 in today's value (Ritchie, 2023). Despite this significant cost, many Chinese men worked hard and eventually saved enough money to bring their sons over. Most of the younger Chinese males arriving between 1900 and 1930. During this phase, many of the Chinese who stayed in New Zealand adapted to other ways of making a living, such as farm labouring, or starting small businesses like laundries, market gardens, and fruit shops. A steady northward migration also began after 1890, with Wellington becoming a major location for the Chinese population, alongside Dunedin. By 1910, most towns in New Zealand had at least one Chinese-run business.

The situation of a lack of Chinese families changed after 1930. First, Chinese migrants were permitted to bring children on temporary student visas as a loophole for family reunion. Second, the extremely discriminatory Poll Tax was abolished in 1932 as a result of increasingly favourable public opinion toward the Chinese community. Additionally, during World War II, New Zealand welcomed 249 wives and 244 children under the age of 16 on temporary refugee visas. Later, they were granted permanent residency, along with students who had lived in New Zealand for more than five years (Ip, 1995). This change in immigration policy was due to growing humanitarian concerns about the impact of the Chinese Civil War. With the increase in Chinese families, a real Chinese community began to form, supported by a growing population and shared culture, and made up of many smaller families, including locally born children. Unlike their fathers or grandfathers, many of these children who were born during this period went on to seek professional careers rather than following the traditional path of business ownership.

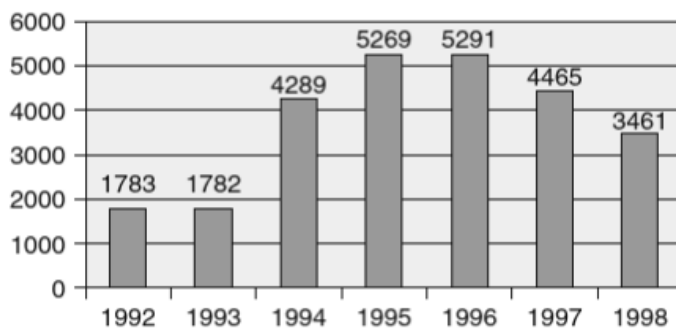
Phase 3: From 1949 Recognition and Change

This phase began in 1949 with the establishment of the PRC and continues to the present day. During this period, discriminatory and exclusionary migration policies shifted from evaluating migrants based on their 'colour' to assessing them by their skills. In the 1950s, due to economic expansion and labour shortages, the New Zealand government actively sought labourers,

particularly to support the agricultural industry. Work-permit schemes were introduced to attract immigrants, primarily from the Pacific. Shortly after, a more open immigration policy that was not based on ethnicity, religion, or nationality was established, recognising that New Zealand's future lay with Asia and the Pacific (Yee, 1974). In 1961, there were about 3,100 Chinese residing in New Zealand.

In 1974, the criteria for entry into New Zealand became based on merit and skill. Policies once giving preference to traditional source countries such as UK, Europe and North America were no longer in place. As a result, New Zealand became a country of migrants (Bedford, 2003). Furthermore, in 1991, Immigration New Zealand introduced a points system, where the English language requirement was relatively low for gaining residency (Friesen & Ip 2001). During this period, New Zealand attracted a substantial number of skilled migrants and business owners from the Pacific and Asia. The immigration policy reflected a more inclusive official attitude, showing greater tolerance towards ethnic minorities, including the Chinese. A significant milestone was reached in 2002 when New Zealand's Prime Minister at the time, the Hon. Helen Clark, issued a formal apology to Chinese New Zealanders for the Poll Tax that was imposed on the Chinese during the 19th and early 20th centuries (Ministry of Ethnic Community, n.d.).

Figure 2: PRC Chinese migration to New Zealand 1992-1998



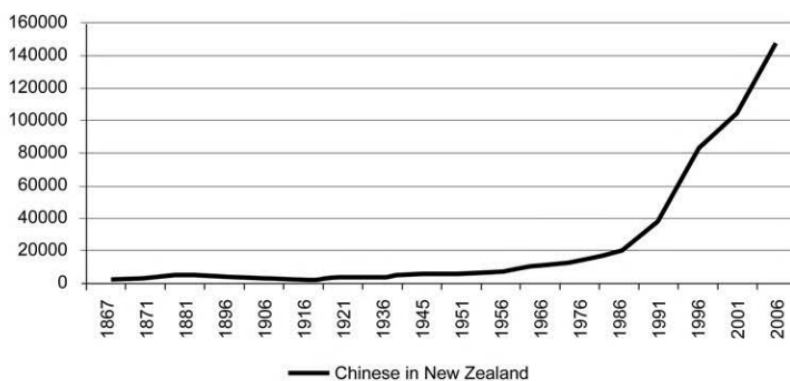
Due to the relatively relaxed migration policies in the 1990s, New Zealand attracted a large number of new migrants from the PRC. As shown in Figure 2, more than 22,000 Chinese individuals moved to New Zealand between 1992 and 1998 (Davidson & Dai, 2008). Although these immigration-friendly policies encouraged greater movement, the minimal English language requirements meant that many of the new migrants arrived with limited English proficiency, which made it difficult for them to connect with local communities. The government provided limited support for their acculturation, and challenges remain regarding

the settlement of migrants and their acceptance by the public (Ho & Bedford, 1998). The desire to fit in led to a strong reluctance to stand out. Chinese values and language were not considered important in the education of younger children, especially those born in New Zealand. Many Chinese families at the time hoped to become more "British," and as a result, many Chinese children were given "Western" names to blend in (Ip, 2013).

Despite the challenges brought by a lack of cultural integration in the communities, the Chinese immigrants' desire to settle in New Zealand remains unchanged. Over the last three decades, ethnic Chinese migrants have mainly come from the PRC, largely due to changes in New Zealand's migration policies from the 1990s onward (Wang, 2019). This wave of migration differed from earlier Chinese migration from Hong Kong and Taiwan, which began in the 1960s. The arrival of migrants from mainland China has significantly reshaped the Chinese demographic profile in New Zealand, leading to population growth and changes in community characteristics (Ip, 2013). One of the most noticeable features of this newer Chinese community has been a much higher ratio of females and a younger workforce, due to the influx of recent migrants.

Alongside skilled migrants, the Business Migrant category also attracted many wealthy Chinese individuals over the past 30 years. This was enabled in part by China's rapid economic growth, which allowed many families to accumulate substantial wealth. These investors were required to contribute a minimum of NZ\$1 million to demonstrate their ability to establish a successful business in New Zealand (Wang, 2019). Their contributions have supported New Zealand's economic development and helped shape the country's business landscape. Figure 3 illustrates the growth of the Chinese population in New Zealand between 1876 and 2006, highlighting the significant increase that began around 1996 (Ip, 2013).

Figure 3: Chinese in New Zealand 1867-2006



2.1.4 The Contemporary Chinese Community in New Zealand

To understand the situation of contemporary Chinese communities in New Zealand, especially in the past 30 years. Data are drawn from various sources, including academic research, open online platforms, and census reports, to demonstrate the changing dynamics of the Chinese community in New Zealand.

General Demographics

The 1973 travel agreement between Australia and New Zealand allowed citizens of both countries to freely visit, live, and work in each other's country without needing to apply for a visa (Ip, 2013). Given Australia's larger economy and job market, this has resulted in a mostly one-way flow, with many New Zealanders choosing to move to Australia. This "brain drain" has become an ongoing issue for New Zealand, as the country loses considerable talent to Australia each year. Despite this, New Zealand's population has shown steady growth over the past decade, partly due to an influx of immigrants (Ip, 2013).

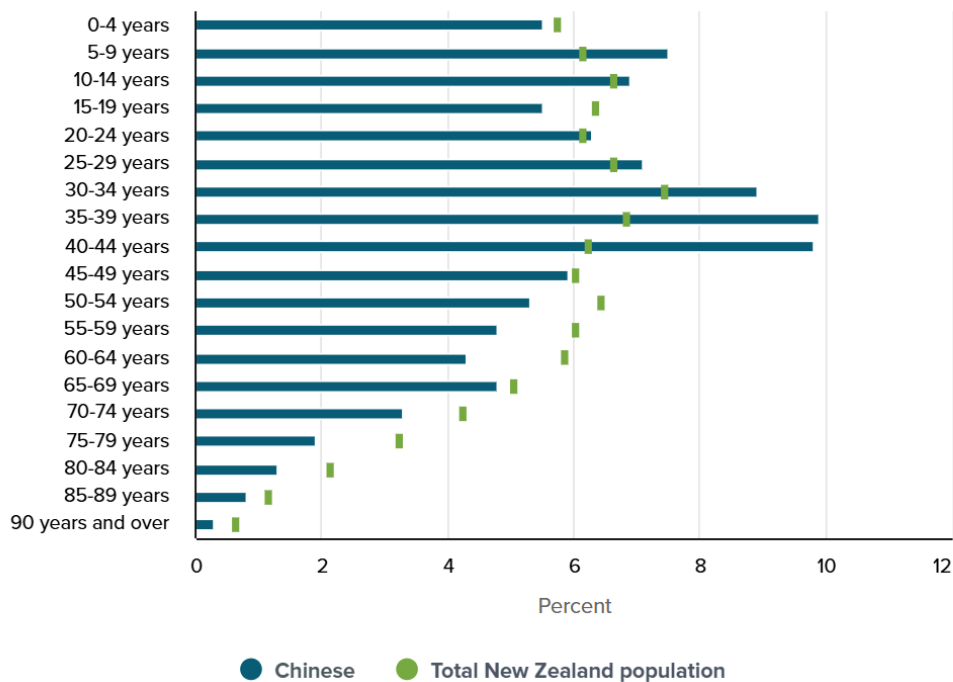
The population of New Zealand is showing an overall increasing trend, reaching nearly 5 million in 2023 (Stats, 2024). Specifically, the population breakdown was 67.8% European, 17.8% Māori, 17.3% Asian, 8.9% Pasifika, and 3% from other ethnicities, including Middle Eastern, Latin American, and African (See Appendix A5). The Asian community, especially the Chinese population, has experienced steady growth over time. In 2023, Chinese represented 5.2% of the total population, accounting for one-third of the Asian population in New Zealand. The Chinese population is projected to continue growing, with estimates reaching over 300,000 by 2028 and more than 400,000 by 2038 (Figure.nz, n.d.).

According to the 2023 Census (See Figure 4), the median age of the Chinese ethnic group was 36.2 years, compared to 38.1 years for the overall New Zealand population, with the primary age groups being 30-44 years and 5-14 years (Stats, n.d.). This indicates that, compared to the total population, the Chinese community has a more vibrant demographic profile, with a greater proportion of individuals within the prime working-age group.

The new migrants have hugely contributed to the growth and dynamic of the Chinese population in New Zealand, with over 69% of Chinese residents being born outside the country, the majority of whom were born in Asia (Stats, n.d.). Many Chinese migrants under the age of 45 were granted residency through the Skilled Migrant or Entrepreneur categories, which are

the two main pathways to gaining residency in New Zealand. In contrast, new migrants aged 65 or over typically come to New Zealand under the Family Reunification category (Henderson, 2003).

Figure 4: Percentage of population by five-year age group, Chinese, and Total New Zealand population ethnic groups, 2023 Census



Many of these younger migrants come from the only child generation and feel obligated to care for their ageing parents by bringing them to New Zealand, which was previously easier to do. However, since 2012, the process has become extremely challenging, as the income or wealth of the sponsors has become a key selection criterion, making it difficult for lower-income migrants to bring their parents to the country (Simon-Kumar, 2015). For those migrants able to bring their parents to New Zealand, this creates both opportunities and challenges for Chinese families (Wang, 2019). On the one hand, financial pressures and the demands of balancing full-time work with family responsibilities placed significant stress on the first generation of Chinese migrants who arrived in New Zealand as adults. Many had to work long hours to establish a stable life in a new country, which often limited the time they could spend with their children. This pressure, combined with cultural and generational differences, sometimes created tension in intergenerational relationships—particularly between New Zealand-born grandchildren and their more traditional Chinese grandparents, who may have held different expectations and communication styles. On the other hand, these

multigenerational living arrangements also offered important cultural benefits. Having grandparents in the home helped pass on traditional values, language, and customs, fostering a stronger connection to Chinese heritage and strengthening the younger generation's sense of identity and belonging. To some extent, this encourages the practice and flourishing of Chinese customs and traditions, including eating habits and leisure activities. Over time, this has reshaped the collective identity of Chinese people in New Zealand. In recent years, there has been greater celebration of Chinese festivals, and many Chinese migrants, especially newer arrivals, maintain strong connections to their cultural roots.

The Chinese community in New Zealand also demonstrates a notable regional variation. More than 69% of Chinese residents live in the Auckland region, with approximately 12% residing in the South Island (see Appendix A6) (Stats, n.d.). This distribution can be attributed to several factors, one being that Auckland already has a well-established Chinese community, allowing Chinese migrants to enjoy a way of life that is still very similar to their culture. For example, the abundance of Chinese restaurants, supermarkets, and other businesses in Auckland provides a wide range of services and conveniences to the Chinese community. Additionally, as the largest city in New Zealand, Auckland offers the financial infrastructure and resources needed for Chinese entrepreneurs to establish businesses. The city's larger job market also attracts many skilled individuals to reside in cities like Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Hamilton. Furthermore, with a strong emphasis on education, many young parents choose to live in Auckland, believing that larger cities generally provide better educational opportunities for their children in New Zealand.

Education Background and Employment

Unlike the earliest Chinese migrants to New Zealand, who were predominantly from rural China, particularly Guangdong, and who were forced to leave due to natural disasters or unstable political environments caused by war, the more recent Chinese migrants tend to be younger, well-educated, and highly skilled professionals or business entrepreneurs. Many have come to New Zealand seeking a less competitive environment for their children or a more leisurely lifestyle (Ip, 1995). These new Chinese migrants have gained residency due to being considered valuable contributors to New Zealand society because of their human capital or financial capabilities (Wang, 2019).

The 2023 census data shows that Chinese are one of the most educated groups in New Zealand (Stats, n.d.). Among the population, 25.5% of Chinese hold a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 15.5% of the total New Zealand population. The percentages of postgraduate degrees, Master's degrees, and PhDs are notably higher than the national average, with 8%, 9.9 %, and 1.4% respectively (see Appendix A7). Among the working Chinese population in New Zealand, professionals made up the largest group at nearly 28%, which is higher than the national average of 23% (Stats, n.d.). This is likely because many Chinese individuals migrated through the skilled migrant category, which prioritises professional qualifications. The next most common occupations among Chinese workers were managers (20%) and tradespeople (19%), reflecting a broad range of employment across sectors.

However, the high levels of education among Chinese in New Zealand do not necessarily translate into higher income. Despite the degrees held by Chinese professionals, they do not appear to gain a significant advantage in the labour market. According to census 2018, only 23.6% of Chinese earn an income of greater than \$50,001, compared to 31.6% of the general New Zealand population (See Appendix A8). Similarly, the 2023 Census data also revealed a noticeable income gap between the Chinese population and the overall New Zealand population (see Appendix A9). For example, the median income for Chinese individuals aged 15–19 was \$13,900, while the median for the total New Zealand population in the same age group was almost double at \$25,000. A similar pattern was observed in the 30–64 age group, where the median income for Chinese was \$39,600 compared to \$57,900 for the total population (Stats, n.d.). These figures highlight a significant socioeconomic imbalance between the Chinese community and the broader New Zealand population.

2.1.5 The Experience of Chinese in New Zealand Labour Market

The cultural and migration experiences of Chinese in New Zealand have presented both challenges and opportunities within the workforce. While many Chinese face significant obstacles indicated in lower income levels and higher unemployment rates compared to the national average, a notable portion of the Chinese population has found success through self-employment and by leveraging strong networks within the Chinese community.

As previously discussed, census data revealed that over 69% of Chinese people in New Zealand were born overseas, indicating that the majority of the Chinese workforce consists of first-

generation migrants (Stats, n.d.). While it is generally expected that a highly educated workforce will perform well in the labour market, skilled and business migrants from Asia, including Chinese migrants often face significant employment barriers in New Zealand (Yugendran, 2024). Many first-generation Chinese migrants experience a mismatch between their qualifications and actual labour market outcomes, leading to underutilised skills and expertise (Ip, 2003). These economic challenges often affect migrants' sense of belonging and commitment to New Zealand, with unemployment and underemployment contributing to social and emotional difficulties. As Li and Campbell (2009) pointed out, "employers ruthlessly shut them out and they were reduced to second-class citizens, still regarded as aliens rather than New Zealand residents" (p. 387). Contributing factors to such challenges include language challenges, limited social and professional networks and racial discrimination. This chapter will later explore these issues in a global context regarding the "Bamboo ceiling."

Although many Chinese migrants from PRC, especially those born in the last 40 years, have received English education as English has been a compulsory subject in China's national college entrance exam since 1978, many still lack sufficient experience and opportunity to practice spoken English with native speakers (Wang, 2022). As a result, English fluency often remains inadequate among first-generation migrants, adding a further communication barrier that disadvantages them in the job market. Racial discrimination remains a significant issue. For example, one research found that New Zealand employers may undervalue Asian professional experience and discriminate based on accents or surnames (Spoonley & Bedford, 2012).

In addition to language barriers, cultural unfamiliarity has also posed significant challenges to the social integration of Chinese migrants, especially for those who arrived in New Zealand as adults. Without shared cultural reference points or ease in communication, many find it difficult to build connections beyond their own communities. As a result, they often remain within familiar Chinese social circles, limiting their opportunities to engage with the broader New Zealand society (Wang, 2014). This social isolation, combined with workplace pressures, can lead to heightened stress and negatively impact their overall well-being. Research suggests that migrants who are better equipped to reduce this stress tend to have higher levels of education, stronger language skills, and a willingness to build relationships with people from the host country (Yao et al., 2015). These factors are essential for successful settlement and meaningful integration into both the workforce and society.

While employment plays a key role in successful settlement, it is not always the primary motivation for Chinese migrants moving to New Zealand. Many come in search of better educational opportunities, a relaxed lifestyle, and a pleasant living environment, rather than strictly for career advancement (Wang & Collins, 2020). However, they often encounter structural barriers to employment, such as the non-recognition of overseas qualifications and prior work experience, which can limit their ability to enter the mainstream job market (Ho et al., 1998). In response to these challenges, some Chinese migrants choose to upskill, take early retirement, or turn to self-employment, particularly in small-scale businesses. These options often provide not only financial security but also a sense of independence and social integration.

This pattern was especially pronounced during the 1990s, when New Zealand's migration policy made business investment a viable pathway to residency (Ho et al., 1998). As a result, many Chinese migrants who struggled to secure employment chose to open shops or small businesses as a practical solution to remain in the country and contribute to its economy. Historically, Chinese migrants have often turned to retailing, food, and restaurant businesses, sectors that required long hours of work but little capital and minimal English proficiency (Young, 1973). These ventures allowed them to establish a livelihood on their own terms while navigating employment barriers.

The continued success of Chinese businesses can also be explained by cultural values such as industriousness, frugality, and strong kinship ties, which have traditionally supported family-run enterprises (Ip, 1996). Ultimately, although employment is significant, the migration experience for many Chinese individuals is shaped by broader goals—seeking personal growth, family wellbeing, and a better quality of life that often sits outside traditional career pathways.

2.2 The Distinctive Nature of Chinese People

Behaviours are driven by individuals' underlying values, which can be influenced by national values, upbringing, educational background, and personality (Schwartz, 2012; Hofstede, 2001). Chinese people may have a particular way of thinking that categorises them as a distinct group. To understand "the Chinese way of doing things" and uncover the underlying cultural differences that form diversity, relevant sources were reviewed to uncover the distinctive qualities of Chinese people and their shared common values that define how and why they behave in certain ways.

China's long history of resource self-sufficiency and its hierarchical imperial political systems contributed to cultural isolation, which in turn shaped a distinctive style of communication among the Chinese people. Unlike mainstream Western countries, which have had more cultural and economic interactions throughout history, China was initially reluctant to accept the Western worldview when it was forced to open (Küçükdeğirmenci, 2021). Even today, several traditional Chinese philosophies continue to influence national values and shape the way Chinese people think and educate their children.

Given the long-shared history and close intergenerational relationships among Chinese people, knowledge and values have traditionally been passed down through generations. This has contributed to the development of a high-context communication style, where much of the meaning is embedded in the context rather than stated explicitly (Chen, 2023). In such cultures, communication relies heavily on implicit understanding, non-verbal cues, and shared background knowledge. This contrasts with low-context cultures, where communication tends to be more direct and information is conveyed explicitly.

Unlike Chinese culture, which is deeply rooted in tradition and high-context communication, New Zealand is a relatively young migrant country marked by strong cultural diversity and is generally considered a low-context culture (Meyer, 2014). According to the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment (MBIE, 2018), clear, direct, and explicit communication is typically expected in New Zealand workplaces. Misunderstandings can easily arise when people from high-context cultures, such as Chinese, communicate indirectly. Therefore, for effective communication between Chinese and non-Chinese individuals in New Zealand, especially in multicultural work environments, it is essential to understand the traditional cultural foundations that shape Chinese values. Examining these values systematically offers a more accurate and respectful understanding of how Chinese people think, interact, and make decisions in both personal and professional contexts.

Politically and economically speaking, places like Taiwan, Malaysia, and Singapore each have their distinct systems, separate from the PRC; and although Hong Kong and Macau are part of China's government structure, they still maintain a high degree of autonomy, especially in their economic policies. However, culturally speaking, research has shown that all these regions are heavily influenced by traditional Chinese culture and, therefore, are categorised as Chinese values in this study (Chow, 2007; Li, et al., 2007). The term "Chinese cultural values" is not

exclusive to people living in mainland China but refers to a wider population that engaged in Chinese cultural and practices in their lives.

A Missionary once commented, “Confucianism is the base, and all Chinese are Confucianists, just as all English are Saxons” (Smith, 1894, p. 295). Indeed, Confucianism cannot be overlooked in the discussion of Chinese cultural values. It heavily impacts traditional Chinese values, considering the length of time that these ideas have influenced the Chinese over the past thousand years. Ever since 134 AD, when a famous Confucian scholar banned all other schools of thought except for Confucianism, China has been almost solely influenced by Confucian values. The purpose of this was to consolidate the imperial governance (Fu et al., 2007). Subsequently, the monarchies across different dynasties adhered to this governance strategy to enhance their authority. However, Confucianism was not merely a tool for governance. Its core virtues are widely accepted and encourage good qualities among individuals. The main idea of Confucianism is to cultivate good morals that are achieved through the virtue of humility (Li, 1986). Many emperors in Chinese history have exemplified this guiding value, prioritising the welfare of the people in their rules of governance to achieve a prosperous and flourishing society.

There are five core virtues that guide behaviour in Confucianism: benevolence (*仁, ren*), righteousness (*义, yi*), propriety (*礼, li*), wisdom (*智, zhi*), and sincerity (*信, xin*) (Li, 1986). Four major cultural manifestations reflect those five core virtues, namely, power enhancement through the class system, the importance of obedience, the doctrine of the mean, and the reciprocity of favour (Fu et al., 2007). To understand how traditional Chinese values rooted in Confucian philosophy continue to shape modern cultural practices, the following section will explore a cultural framework that is comprehensive and supported by empirical studies.

2.2.1 The GLOBE Project Analysis of Confucian Chinese Countries

The Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) research project provided a comprehensive analysis of cultural values and leadership perceptions across 61 countries (Chhokar, 2007). Initiated in the 1990s under the leadership of Robert J. House, the GLOBE project has made a significant contribution to cross-cultural leadership studies by identifying how cultural values shape leadership preferences in different societies. One of its

key impacts lies in highlighting the importance of cultural context in understanding effective leadership behaviours. The project systematically examined both societal cultural practices (as is) and values (should be), providing a robust framework for understanding diverse cultures. As part of this study, countries were grouped into ten cultural clusters. The Confucian Asia cluster included research conducted in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Singapore (refer to Appendix A10, A11, and A12 for the results of the nine GLOBE dimensions) (Fu et al., 2007; Chow, 2007; Li, et al., 2007). Drawing on GLOBE data, along with relevant findings from Taiwan and Malaysia, the following section explores the shared traditional values across Confucian-influenced societies, while also highlighting how differing socio-economic and political contexts have shaped variations in cultural expression.

Power Distance

Power distance refers to the extent to which members of a society agree that power should be unequally distributed (Javidan & Dastmalchian, 2009). In the traditional Chinese culture, power distance is notably high, meaning that people generally accept an unequal distribution of power and have a strong respect for authority. This acceptance, evident in daily practices today, has been shaped by imperial governance and the historical application of Confucian principles in China. One of the biggest reasons that Confucian values were promoted by emperors was due to their emphasis on obedience to the higher class. The observance of such a strict order cannot be achieved without a high level of obedience, which is intended to reinforce hierarchical relationships. There is a distinctive difference between the Confucian class system and the Indian caste system. While both frameworks centralise power within the government, the Indian caste system is rigid and strictly based on birth. In contrast, Confucianism allows limited social mobility based on effort and opportunity, although upward movement is generally discouraged (Li, 1986). The goal of the class system in China was to promote social harmony through the cultivation of virtues.

Additionally, Confucianism believes that wisdom is gained through long life experiences that come with old age. Therefore, in an ancient Chinese family, the oldest man possessed absolute power, and all other family members were expected to obey and respect the decisions made by him. A country is also viewed as a larger family, where the emperor is seen as the head, and all people are regarded as children who must obey the emperor as their parents (Yu et al., 1999).

In the study conducted by Fu et al. (2007) examining Chinese values under the GLOBE dimensions, Chinese managers from mainland China exhibited a higher tolerance for unequal power. However, the research also found that there is a common desire among Chinese people for power to be shared. Additionally, the influence of Western democracy has impacted the younger generation of Chinese, leading to more calls for equality. Many of them are breaking traditional norms, such as showing absolute deference to seniors. This new generation is empowered to break traditions, try new things, and engage in behaviours they previously feared. While they still maintain respect for authority, they feel freer to express opinions that they believe are valuable.

It can be argued that the influence of the hierarchy and class system is less prominent in modern China, where there is a desire for democracy and equality. The Cultural Revolution also remains a reason why traditional structures are not as strictly followed in contemporary China (Zhang, 1997). Mao believed that Confucian doctrines had become a restrictive force that limited the thinking of the Chinese people. To emphasise Marxism, many traditional Chinese philosophies, like Confucianism's class system, have been largely criticised from the 1960s to the 1970s. Therefore, although cultural roots of hierarchy have in some ways promoted social harmony, they also present challenges to modern society.

To some extent, the political reforms have changed people's behaviour only on the surface. Thousands of years of influence will not be easily overcome after 76 years of government under the Communist Party. It is still standard practice to address those authority figures with official titles, social rights, and privileges that are closely tied to one's economic status. People who live under the influence of Chinese culture continue to behave in ways that reflect this, and they are expected to respect authority.

Performance Orientation

A high-performance-oriented country rewards individuals or groups for their achievements and excellent performance, thereby encouraging hard-working individuals to strive for their personal best (Javidan & Dastmalchian, 2009). Research indicates that people from places like China, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan believe that high performance is strongly encouraged by society, individuals in these regions are especially motivated by the desire for achievement (Fu et al., 2007).

One way to express success is through achieving academic excellence from a young age. Individuals in those societies face extreme pressure due to high population and limited resources. For many, academic success leads to better job opportunities, which is often seen as the only way to gain economic status. Beyond modern societal pressures that encourage individuals to work hard, education has long held a central place in traditional Chinese culture. In ancient China, lifelong learning was highly valued, and this mindset has been passed down through generations. As a result, many Chinese people grow up with the belief that education offers a path to a better life. Therefore, it is not only social pressure that motivates Chinese individuals to study, but also deeply rooted traditional values that reinforce this belief.

The class system was implemented in China for a very long time. Among the four social classes, the nobility or scholarly elite, who pursued knowledge and held government positions (士, *shi*), were at the top, followed by landowners and farmers who produced food (农, *nong*). Next were craftsmen who produced goods or services that contributed to infrastructure (工, *gong*), and merchants engaged in trade were viewed to be at the bottom (商, *shang*) (Chang & Lee, 2013). This was because Confucius opposed luxury and believed that businessmen do not contribute tangible value to society (National Geographic Society, 2025). Instead, they earn a living by focusing on profit margins. As a result, despite their economic wealth, merchants are not typically well-respected in ancient Chinese society.

To achieve the highest class of *shi* in ancient China, political positions were primarily obtained through a meritocratic system established by the imperial examinations. Or secured through hereditary aristocracy (Kim, et al., 2019). For many individuals, studying hard and passing the imperial examination was the only means for those from non-noble families to rise in social class. Consequently, many Chinese still have in this mindset that “knowledge has the power to change one's fate,” that high achievement is a must to survive.

Future Orientation

Future orientation refers to the degree to which individuals or societies prioritise long-term benefits and plan and envision the future (Fu et al., 2007). In Hofstede's research, this dimension was initially derived from Michael Harrison Bond's work, labelled as Confucian work dynamism (Hofstede, 2011; Bond & Hofstede, 1988). This is observed mainly in societies influenced by Confucianism, where having a long-term orientation is characterised by perseverance, thrift, structuring relationships by status, and maintaining a sense of shame.

Conversely, those with a short-term orientation somewhere tend to focus on reciprocating social obligations, respecting traditions, protecting one's reputation, and seeking personal stability.

Hofstede pointed out that Chinese culture is long-term oriented (Hofstede, 2011). Historically, in China, as a farming country, farmers plan for the long term and save as much as possible (Fu et al., 2007). Even in modern China, the values of saving money, buying homes, and making investments are highly regarded among Chinese individuals. Additionally, the strong emphasis on education among Chinese people stems from the belief that education is a long-term investment in the future, offering a pathway to improved economic status. This value reflects the future-orientated mindset commonly observed within the Chinese communities across the world.

This long-term focus can also be observed from the Chinese political leadership in the PRC. The Chinese Communist Party demonstrates a distinctly future-orientated leadership model through long-term planning frameworks, such as the “Two Centenaries” strategy. This plan aims to build a “moderately prosperous society” by 2021 and a “modern socialist country” by 2049, aligning national goals with historical milestones (Lu, 2020). These ambitions are supported by regular five-year plans, reflecting a deeply embedded cultural preference for long-term thinking and gradual, strategic development. This future focus is both political and cultural, influenced by Confucian values that emphasise planning, stability, and collective progress.

A study conducted among middle managers in Singapore showed a high value placed on future orientation (Li, et al., 2007). However, in China and Hong Kong, middle managers did not show a clear indication of high future orientation in empirical studies. (Fu et al., 2007; Chow, 2007). Young people in Hong Kong tend to be reluctant to engage in future-oriented behaviour, favouring a mindset of living in the moment due to political uncertainty. Similarly, in China, low interest rates set by the government have stimulated greater expenditure, leading many to focus on the present rather than long-term planning.

Therefore, although traditional China are seen as future-oriented and those values are still valid in many ways that is rooted in the Chinese society. At the same time, the younger generation has shown a tendency to prioritise personal stability and make decisions based on short-term

gains. This mindset is reinforced by a highly institutionalised society, where visible forms of profit and personal advancement are increasingly valued in the short term.

Assertiveness

This measure examines the extent to which individuals demonstrate assertiveness and dominance in social relationships (Li, et al., 2007). Studies has found that Chinese people tend to be highly assertive in their relationships, even more so than Americans in some cases (Schmit & Yeh, 1992; Shermerhorn & Bond, 1991). Historically, China has been a male-dominated society where women were often regarded as the property of men, expected to serve their fathers in childhood, their husbands in marriage, and their son6s in old age. (Fu et al., 2007). There has long been an emphasis on masculinity in the patriarchal society, with behaviours such as assertiveness, aggression, and dominance being widely accepted among Chinese males.

However, Chinese individuals are also conditioned to behave in a reserved and respectful manner due to social norms. The concept of "mianzi" meaning "face" refers to maintaining respect for others, which prevents behaviours that may disturb harmony in relationships (Fu et al., 2007). Prestige is sometimes gained by receiving and giving "face" to one another, suggesting that individuals should not be overly assertive in order to maintain dignity for others; in return, others will grant them "face". The belief is important as reflected in the Chinese saying, "Face is like the bark of a tree; without it, the tree dies" (Fu et al., 2007). Indeed, those who lack "mianzi" are often viewed as social outcasts, bringing shame not only upon themselves but also on their families, which may struggle to function in the collective society. Furthermore, the Confucian virtue known as the 'Doctrine of the Mean' emphasises the importance of avoiding extremes to maintain social harmony (Xia, 2020). It suggests that excessive emotions or desires can lead to disorder, and therefore, individuals must exercise self-restraint and composure in all situations.

This tension between assertiveness, which is often promoted in patriarchal systems, and the restraint encouraged by Confucian values is evident in empirical research. For example, Chinese middle managers reported that while assertiveness is generally not encouraged in society, they still believe it should be valued and accepted (Fu et al., 2007). This seemingly contradictory view may also stem from the rapidly changing social and economic environment,

where Chinese individuals recognise that assertiveness is becoming increasingly important for success in a competitive, globalised world.

Institutional and In-Group Collectivism

Institutional and in-group collectivism measures the degree to which members take pride in and are encouraged to integrate into broader entities like villages and society and smaller social circles, such as friends and family, respectively (Li, et al., 2007). Traditionally, Chinese people think and behave in a more group-oriented manner, highly valuing relationships, and family. Confucianism is not focused on individual salvation or rights, but rather on collective social well-being (Hays, n.d.). A well-ordered world results from the notion of “filial piety,” which prioritises parents' needs alongside a set of rules of conduct. These rules include obedience to elders within the family, obligations to provide material and emotional support as elders age, and the suppression of personal desires that differ from those of the elders.

Furthermore, in Confucianism, the five constant relationships emphasise social responsibility, where individuals are expected to fulfil obligations to one another. These relationships are ruler above subject, father above son, elder above younger, husband above wife, and mutual respect and equality between friends (Hays, n.d.). The five relationships can be understood as tools for bringing coherence to an ideal, ritualised society and allowing individuals to fulfil their social roles in daily life. The influence of these rules can be observed in the daily lives of modern Chinese people. Unmarried children are expected to live with their parents, and it is also common for three generations to live under one roof. People often share meals, and family gatherings during holidays emphasise the importance of togetherness and celebration.

Due to the influence and long-standing practice of those social obligations and rules, research has shown that Chinese people's behaviour tends to have a strong inclination towards in-group collectivism (Li, et al., 2007; Fu et al., 2007; Chow, 2007). Even today, the Hong Kong government has implemented policies that encourage children to care for their elders. Similarly, the Singapore government has emphasised the important idea that "strong families are our foundation" to promote collective efforts in navigating global challenges.

As a result of these governmental initiatives, there is also a significant amount of institutional collectivism observed especially in Singapore and China, where social cohesion is emphasised and integrated into many aspects of daily life. However, at the same time people from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and mainland China have shown a desire to be more individualistic. Studies have

found that this decline in traditional Chinese collective values is decreasing due to industrialisation and rapid economic development. In these contexts, private life is becoming more prioritised, and many individuals socialise primarily within their small circles in modern Chinese society. Influenced by Western ideals, the younger generation is becoming increasingly independent and has created more options in life. Research indicates that many Chinese individuals wish to embrace more individualistic values than what is currently prevalent in their society (Ogihara, 2023).

Gender Egalitarianism

Gender relations refer to the degree to which society minimises gender role differences. It involves the stereotypes held by society that may favour one gender over another (House et al., 2002). Within the Confucian class system, females are perceived as having a lower status in a family compared to males, with older males holding the dominant power. Females are often expected to live under the authority of males throughout their lives. Patriarchy has been practised and perpetuated in ancient China. In modern societies, despite significant economic development and government efforts to promote equality, research has shown that PRC, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore exhibit varying degrees of favouritism toward males, with Singapore presenting as the most equitable (Li, et al., 2007; Fu et al., 2007; Chow, 2007). Although women in Chinese societies now have the freedom to pursue careers beyond traditional domestic roles, they remain heavily represented in fields such as the arts, healthcare, and education. Persistent gender stereotypes continue to hinder their career advancement, access to job benefits, and professional recognition. (Eaton, 1998; Shaffer et al., 2000).

Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance is a measure of the degree to which people rely on social rules and processes. It reflects their belief in definitive truths and their desire for consistency, order, and structure to navigate challenges in their daily lives or to avoid situations that are unclear or ambiguous (House et al., 2002). In traditional Chinese culture, there is a strong emphasis on the importance of order, and as a result, Chinese people tend to feel more comfortable with rules and guidance to take on challenges and avoid uncertainty. However, due to modern governments' impact, there are variations in levels of uncertainty avoidance among different regions. For instance, China and Singapore exhibit a higher tendency toward uncertainty avoidance, while Hong Kong and Taiwan show more tolerance for ambiguity (Li, et al., 2007;

Fu et al., 2007; Chow, 2007). In Hong Kong, government policies often encourage risk-taking within the evolving economic environment, and many entrepreneurs recognise that significant rewards can come from embracing risks when starting new businesses. Nonetheless, all these Chinese societies display a medium to high level of uncertainty avoidance compared to the global scale, where rules and structures are generally appreciated and desired.

Humane Orientation

The degree to which a society rewards and promotes people for treating others fairly, generously, carefully, and kindly is measured by its Humane Orientation (House et al., 2002). The Confucian virtue of benevolence has influenced behaviour among the Chinese people. The belief is that the emperor should govern the country with benevolence and kindness. The concept of "face" also emphasises the importance of caring for the needs of others. All efforts to maintain positive relationships aim to preserve social harmony. Chinese people generally avoid starting conflicts or wars unless they feel threatened.

Chinese societies have ranked relatively high in humane orientation, whereas Singapore ranks the lowest (Li, et al., 2007; Fu et al., 2007; Chow, 2007). This could be a result of Singapore's value of collective well-being, and the government has strong control over individual behaviour. For example, the punishment for cane remains unchanged in Singapore. At the same time, all Chinese societies are expanding expenditures on social welfare, looking after their citizens, which reflects a high degree of humane orientation. People often place value on harmony, environment, and relationships, sometimes more than simply completing work tasks. However, traditional values have been challenged, and research indicates that many Chinese individuals are now aspiring for more assertiveness and aggressiveness in order to progress and compete (Fu et al., 2007).

All the GLOBE dimensions discussed in relation to Chinese cultural values demonstrate that, despite increasing exposure to Western ideologies, shifting government policies, and global political and economic trends, traditional Chinese culture continues to shape the behaviours and mindsets of many Chinese people, including those living outside of China. Cultural frameworks rooted in thousands of years of Confucian philosophy, social norms, and deeply embedded values are not easily replaced or transformed within just a few decades. Younger generations of Chinese people may increasingly aspire to values such as equality, assertiveness, and personal autonomy, which are often associated with Western societies. However, Chinese

communities, both in China and abroad, continue to be shaped by long-standing traditions. As a result, individuals raised in these cultural settings are often guided by inherited expectations and social norms, even when their personal ideals differ.

2.3 Chinese Leadership Behaviours

The previous section discussed Chinese values which shaped by Confucian philosophy, to provide a foundation for understanding the behaviours of Chinese individuals. These values not only influence how Chinese people interact socially but also shape the leadership styles of those living overseas. To explore how Chinese leadership is expressed and perceived in multicultural environments, the following section will examine how these culturally rooted leadership styles interact with non-Chinese followers and the implications of such interactions. It begins by reviewing the concept of Implicit Leadership Theories and comparing culturally appreciated leadership styles in both China and New Zealand. The section will then delve into how Chinese leaders are perceived and how they navigate leadership roles in non-Chinese settings.

2.3.1 The Implicit Leadership Theory and the GLOBE Leadership Study

The relationship dynamics are impacted by the context in which Chinese leaders and their followers interact, especially in a culturally different environment where expectations may vary. The Implicit Leadership Theory explains why the same leadership behaviours may be interpreted or understood differently by followers at different times (Lord & Maher, 1993). This theory suggests that individuals hold cognitive models that help them interpret and evaluate their leadership and that of others. What might be seen as acceptable behaviour in the Chinese cultural context may fail in a different environment. For Chinese overseas, the same leadership traits may not be as desirable compared to those in their home country because they act differently from the culture they are in, and their non-Chinese followers unconsciously draw on their Implicit Leadership Theories to evaluate good or bad leaders (Schyns & Schilling, 2011). Additionally, social constructivism posits that reality is collectively socially constructed, all knowledge arises from social interactions between individuals and the societies they inhabit (Burr, 1995). Therefore, what constitutes a leader is shaped by the individuals, making the

meanings of good and bad leadership fluid and context dependent. Similarly, the term "Chinese" can be understood as socially constructed, where a group of people shares the same identity, customs, and social rules.

To further explore how cultural context shapes leadership expectations, the GLOBE study is particularly relevant. The GLOBE research project builds on Implicit Leadership Theory by empirically investigating how shared cultural values influence people's mental models of effective leadership (House et al., 2004). It examines the ways in which leadership is understood and preferred across different societies, highlighting that people from similar cultural backgrounds tend to develop common ideas about ideal leadership traits. To better understand these cultural variations, the following section compares leadership preferences across four countries: China, Hong Kong, and Singapore, which belong to the Confucian Asian cluster, and New Zealand, which represents the Anglo cluster. The GLOBE study identified six second-order leadership dimensions: charismatic/value-based, team-oriented, participative, humane-oriented, autonomous, and self-protective leadership. These second-order dimensions are composite factors developed by grouping multiple first-order leadership attributes to offer a more holistic picture of leadership styles (House et al., 2004). Appendix A11 presents a comparative table of the rankings of these leadership styles in the four selected countries.

Leaders in China and Hong Kong demonstrated a stronger preference for self-protective leadership (China ranked 14th; Hong Kong 18th), which was ranked significantly lower in New Zealand (45th). This leadership style reflects behaviours such as face-saving and status-consciousness, which align with Confucian cultural values that prioritise social harmony, respect for hierarchy, and relational maintenance (House et al., 2004). In addition, all three Confucian Asian societies scored higher than New Zealand on humane-oriented leadership, a style that values compassion, patience, and interpersonal support. China ranked 16th, Singapore 10th, and Hong Kong 31st, compared to New Zealand's rank of 37. This result reflects Confucian ideals such as benevolence (*ren*) and the moral obligation to care for others, which continue to influence leadership expectations in these societies (Fu et al., 2007).

In contrast, New Zealand showed strong preferences for participative and charismatic/value-based leadership, reflecting Anglo cultural values of egalitarianism, individual agency, and inspirational leadership (Kennedy, 2007). Interestingly, Singapore also ranked relatively high for charismatic leadership, suggesting that despite its Confucian heritage, certain modern leadership expectations, such as visionary thinking being increasingly embraced in diverse

cultural contexts (Li et al., 2007). This may reflect the growing globalisation of work and leadership practices, particularly in high-performing, internationally connected societies like Singapore. Therefore, compared to other confusion clusters, Singapore scored more similar to Anglo clusters, which are high in charismatic and participatory leadership and low in self-protective leadership.

While cultural clusters continue to shape leadership preferences, the findings also point to an emerging convergence around certain leadership values. Despite cultural differences, the GLOBE study found that charismatic/value-based and team-oriented leadership styles are widely endorsed across most cultural clusters, indicating a possible convergence toward universal leadership ideals (House et al., 2004). These universally admired traits include integrity, collaboration, and the ability to inspire and motivate others indicates that despite varying contexts, there are common human needs that are desired and appreciated globally. For New Zealand, where cultural diversity continues to grow, recognising and integrating culturally diverse leadership perspectives, especially from Confucian cultures that emphasis relationship and collective wellbeing may be critical to fostering inclusion in society.

2.3.2 The Interaction Between Chinese Leaders and Their Team

Many studies across the globe have shed light on different aspects of leadership, emphasising the need to consider cultural subtleties and biases within organisational contexts (Kim et al., 2022). In this section, literature is examined to better understand the impact of Chinese leadership in various contexts. Below are a series of empirical research studies presented regarding the impact of Chinese or Asian leadership in different cultural environments.

Paternalistic leadership

When discussing Chinese leadership, paternalistic leadership has predominantly appeared in the research; especially, it has been investigated to describe the essential traits of Chinese business executives' conduct in contemporary organisations and family-run enterprises (Farh & Cheng, 2000; Redding, 1990). Paternalistic leaders act like parental figures, expecting obedience from their followers while taking on significant responsibility for their well-being. Paternalistic leaders often hold considerable power in the workplace but also protect and care for their workers as if they were family members. This leadership style reflects the Confucian

ideal of “ren,” which means benevolence. At the same time, hierarchy is observed to maintain harmony and order. The virtue of obedience can be regarded as the foundation of the paternalistic leadership style that is prevalent in many Chinese organisations (Farh & Cheng, 2000).

Paternalistic leadership is criticised for being authoritarian and directive in Western literature; however, research in Chinese, Latin-American, and Turkish cultures has shown great acceptance of this leadership styles (Martinez, 2003; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2006). Indeed, the claim that paternalistic leadership is culturally limited is further supported by prior empirical evidence, that it works well in high power distance and collectivist cultures. However, in societies with low power distance, followers typically see themselves as equals to their leaders, exerting their autonomy and taking the initiative to change. Because of this, subordinates challenge the inequity and power disparities that are imbedded in paternalism and do not readily accept authority.

Several studies have examined the impact of Chinese paternalistic leadership on non-Chinese individuals. For instance, Chen and Kao's (2009) research attempted to understand the relationship between Chinese paternalistic leadership behaviour and the psychological well-being of non-Chinese subordinates from multicultural backgrounds. The research presents evidence of the negative impact of authoritarian behaviour by Chinese leaders on non-Chinese subordinates. This finding differs significantly from previous studies that indicated positive effects on employee well-being in Chinese communities, such as China and Taiwan (Chao and Kao, 2005; Cheng et al., 2004). However, the 2009 study also emphasises the importance of cultural norms, such as uncertainty avoidance, in moderating these negative effects. When non-Chinese subordinates have a high tendency toward uncertainty avoidance, the negative impact on their psychological well-being is lessened. It is clear that more research needs to be done to understand Chinese leaders' behaviour in a foreign business environment and more accurate data are called to provide practical recommendations. This is supported by Pellegrini and Scandura (2008), whose article gave important insights into the idea of paternalistic leadership, emphasising the need to gain a thorough grasp of its antecedents and impacts on organisational results.

Additionally, two studies examined Chinese expatriates working at Confucius Institutes in various Western countries, including Canada and the United States. The goal of these studies was to understand how the three dimensions of paternalistic leadership—benevolence, morality,

and authoritarianism—can affect employee well-being and work engagement in multicultural organisations. The studies found that benevolent and moral leadership styles enhance employees' collective self-concept and reduce work–family conflict, both of which contribute to improved psychological well-being and higher work engagement. In contrast, authoritarian leadership was shown to increase work–family conflict and negatively affect employee well-being and motivation. These findings suggest that the caring and ethical aspects of paternalistic leadership can be effective in supporting Chinese paternalistic leaders working abroad. However, this research was conducted in the education sector, which may not reflect Chinese paternalistic leaders' experiences in other industries. Further investigation is needed to assess how paternalistic leadership functions in more diverse workplaces and cultural contexts.

The studies mentioned highlight the contrasting impact of Chinese paternalistic leadership, raising the question of whether some aspects of this type of leadership are culturally specific or universally accepted? Mansur et al. (2017) explored this by examining the global relevance and cultural differences in paternalistic leadership using data from the GLOBE project, which included 59 societies. Their findings indicate that paternalistic leadership is neither universally embraced nor consistently understood. Instead, it takes on different "shades" across cultures, shaped by underlying societal values. The study also distinguishes between two main forms of paternalistic leadership: benevolent paternalism, which involves genuine care, guidance, and support for subordinates; and exploitative paternalism, where authority is used primarily to control and direct others for organisational outcomes. However, the categorisation into benevolent and exploitative forms may oversimplify the complex nature of paternalistic leadership.

The above research reveals the impact of paternalistic leadership, captures many cultural nuances that are often overlooked. The same leadership styles are perceived and expressed in various ways, which cannot simply be classified as being effective or not. More research is needed in different industrial and cultural contexts to achieve a comprehensive understanding of Chinese paternalistic leadership.

When the East meets the West

As discussed in the previous section, the Implicit Leadership Theory suggests that an individual's evaluation of good and bad leaders is impacted by the context in which they interact; therefore, each individual has their unique perception of leadership. With the

increasing number of Chinese overseas and ongoing globalisation, many Chinese professionals have taken up leadership positions in various non-Chinese communities. The literature below examines contemporary Chinese leadership and the encounter with the Western worldview to allow a deeper understanding of dynamics.

Firstly, the differences in leadership styles between the East and West should be examined in order to understand the experience of Chinese leaders in Western society. Tang (2024) investigated how leadership styles in Western and Chinese environments are influenced by cultural values. The study emphasises that Chinese leadership often prioritises authority, hierarchy, and collectivism, resulting in more directive and harmony-focused approaches. In contrast, Western leadership tend to favour individualism, open communication, creativity, encouraging innovative and participatory methods. Tang's findings align with many other studies examining the leadership styles of Chinese and Western leaders (e.g. Lakey, 2007). As previously discussed, the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004) found that Chinese respondents placed greater value on authoritarian and humane-oriented leadership, while Western cultures favoured participative leadership styles

These differences in leadership preferences between the East and West can create barriers for overseas Chinese leaders, particularly when managing multicultural teams. For example, Wang et al. (2013) investigate the challenges Chinese managers face in multinational corporations as they aspire to senior global leadership roles. Despite efforts by these multinational organisations to cultivate leadership talent, Chinese managers often struggle to advance beyond middle management. The findings reveal significant disparities: approximately half of the leadership attributes valued by non-Chinese senior global leaders are neither recognised nor prioritised by Chinese managers. This disconnect is attributed to the influence of Western-centric leadership competency frameworks, which may not align with Chinese managers' cultural values and perceptions of leadership. The study emphasises the limitations of applying Western leadership models universally and underscores the need for culturally sensitive approaches to leadership development.

The study by Lin et al. (2018) explores how traditional Chinese ideological values influence leadership dynamics when Chinese individuals lead multicultural teams in a Western context, specifically in the Netherlands. The finding has given useful insights on the incorporation of traditional Chinese philosophies in intercultural leadership, indicating possible obstacles and opportunities for Chinese expatriate managers in foreign cultural environments. It implies that

all Chinese expatriate managers engage with a blend of three ideologies (Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism); they tend to have a mixed perspective rather than believing in a single ideology. However, all three philosophies cause distinct difficulties in a foreign cultural environment, but they also produce some harmony with foreign employees due to the alignment of values between Chinese managers and local culture. In addition, according to this study, Chinese leaders who are skilled at observing others and adapting to new contexts have more leadership potential in the local context.

These studies demonstrate that overseas Chinese leaders can create synergy when their values align with the local cultural environment, resulting in a positive impact on their followers. However, negative effects arise when their behaviours contradict local beliefs. Furthermore, those who show greater adaptability are more likely to be successful in Western societies.

To what extent do overseas Chinese leaders alter their leadership behaviour when leading in multicultural teams? Liang et al. (2021) address this question through a study investigating the influence of acculturation on Implicit Leadership Theories among Chinese immigrant professionals (CIPs) in Australia. The study shows that most CIPs have realised that effective leadership in Australian culture should be exercised through influence and collaboration rather than dominance and authority. This research highlights the shift in the Implicit Leadership Theory perceptions of these immigrant professionals. Although this study implies that acculturation has impacted CIPs' perceptions of successful leadership, it does not clarify the extent to which these changes in behaviour have helped them meet Australian or Western expectations, nor how they might leverage these changes to advance their careers abroad.

All the above studies reveal significant differences regarding the Eastern and Western Implicit Leadership Theories. When the East meets the West, it appears that Eastern ways of thinking and behaving are not incorporated into social acceptance standards. Only when Eastern and Western standards align are Chinese individuals deemed effective leaders. However, Implicit Leadership Theory suggests that there is no right or wrong way to lead; instead, it is the mismatch between leadership styles and followers' expectations that can create communication barriers, leading to unintended consequences such as negative psychological effects on non-Chinese subordinates when led by Chinese leaders. In past decades, leadership literature has been largely shaped by Western perspectives, while Eastern wisdom has often been examined through a biased lens, studied more to critique than to genuinely understand or learn from

Eastern ways of leading. The question is: when will the spotlight be shared among all perspectives?

Contemporary Research on the Bamboo Ceiling

The term "bamboo ceiling" originated from the American context to refer to the systematic barriers that prevent Asian Americans from reaching leadership positions (Hyun, 2005). Subsequent research has adopted the term in other Anglo-Saxon countries such as Canada, Australia, the UK, and New Zealand (Diversity Council Australia, 2014). The under-representation of Asians in leadership positions within western societies is commonly observed, and numerous studies have been conducted to explore the reasons behind it (e.g. Wong & Tran, 2020; Yustantio, 2018; Westfall, 2021).

A considerable amount of work has been done in Australia. The Diversity Council Australia (2014) noted that only 18% of Asians feel their workplaces are free from cultural bias. Furthermore, more than 60% of Asians feel pressured to conform their behaviour to Anglo-Saxon leadership styles in order to be successful. Similarly, Silva and Zhao (2024) pointed out that systematic barriers are a significant challenge that prevents the career advancement of Asians in the Australian workforce. The perception of Asian Australians as being passive or overly technical can hinder their leadership prospects, especially since assertiveness and self-promotion are widely expected in the workplace culture. However, when Asians are assertive, they are often seen as being authoritarian and undesirable. Moreover, Yustantio (2018) highlighted that Asians are encouraged to learn and adapt to local culture to fit in with the dominant group. This can be problematic if individuals are quiet and feel pressured to act inauthentically.

The phenomenon was not found to be unique to Australia. In America, Westfall (2021) pointed out the same issue faced by Asian Americans. Chinese leaders are often portrayed as lacking leadership qualities, which hinders their promotion to executive roles, despite their qualifications and performance. Similarly, a study conducted in Canada suggests that Asians face similar challenges, particularly regarding the misalignment of Western-centric leadership traits: "They (Chinese) are considered not assertive or aggressive enough, but ironically, often face a backlash ... if they do assert themselves" (CPAC Institute, 2021, para. 7). Additionally, "the lack of mentorship support and role models at the senior executive level ... results in an inability of Chinese and other racialised people to see themselves in top leadership roles" (para.

8). The study also highlighted the compounded challenges faced by Chinese-Canadian women due to intersecting racial and gender biases.

We know that Asians comprise a diverse ethnic group with varied cultural norms and ideologies. To highlight this, two studies suggested that under-representation in leadership positions is more prominent among East Asians, such as Chinese or Japanese individuals, compared to South Asians, like Indians (Lu et al., 2020; Lu, 2021). The lower levels of assertiveness among East Asians have been identified as the key factor hindering their career advancement, rather than prejudice or lack of motivation. “East Asians were lower in assertiveness, which consistently mediated the leadership attainment gap between East Asians and South Asians.” (Lu et al., 2020, p. 6413). By contrast, South Asians tend to be more assertive. That aligns with more closely Western-centric leadership traits that lead to promotions to senior positions. Moreover, by analysing MBA student networks, Lu (2021) found that East Asians exhibited fewer cross-ethnic connections and reduced leadership nominations and elections. This pattern was not observed among South Asians, who had more diverse networks and a higher emergence of leadership.

So far, we have examined studies that reveal the challenge currently facing by Asians in the workplace primarily revolves around the pursuit of leadership positions. What about those who have already achieved leadership roles? Kim et al. (2022) investigated the perspectives of Asian American leaders, shedding light on both the conditional benefits and limitations that this group encounters at work; particularly concerning the attributes associated with ideal leaders and followers. The article indicates that, while Asian leaders in leadership positions are perceived as equally effective, they still face stereotypes that impede their promotion. For example, many positive qualities commonly associated with Asians, such as loyalty and a strong work ethic, are often seen as traits of good followers rather than as indicators of effective leadership. The study revealed that although Asian leaders are not viewed as ineffective, the career advancement of other Asian leaders is restricted due to these stereotypes. “The Bamboo Ceiling is not an Asian issue, but an issue of cultural fit” (Lu et al., 2020, p. 6413). This highlights the importance of understanding the successful pathways of Asian leaders.

These studies highlight the importance of a sophisticated view of leadership dynamics that takes cultural, contextual, and intersectional elements into consideration. They emphasise the complexities and challenges experienced by leaders from different cultures, emphasising the significance of inclusion in organisational leadership. These findings lay a solid platform for

ongoing investigation and development of successful leadership practices in multicultural and diverse workplaces, especially in New Zealand, with an increasingly diversified workforce, but limited research has been done.

2.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the extant literature on Chinese individuals living overseas and their leadership styles when leading non-Chinese teams. It began with a statistical overview of the Chinese diaspora, which has existed for centuries and is now globally dispersed. While many Chinese historically migrated in search of better living conditions with the hope of returning home, over time, many adapted to host societies and developed blended identities. The term “haiwai hua qiao” meaning “Chinese overseas” came to describe those of Chinese descent who acquired citizenship abroad.

Although most Chinese overseas reside in Asia, increasing numbers have migrated to Oceania, including New Zealand. Chinese migration to New Zealand began in the 1850s with gold miners, some of whom later brought their families despite the discriminatory Poll Tax. These early settlers established small businesses, and immigration increased under more open policies. By 2018, Chinese made up over 5% of New Zealand’s population. Despite high levels of education, many Chinese migrants have struggled to translate their qualifications into economic success, pointing to under-representation in leadership and underutilisation in the workforce.

To better understand this, the chapter examined traditional Chinese cultural values using the GLOBE project framework, including the influence of Confucianism in modern Chinese societies such as China, Hong Kong, and Singapore. While younger generations have been shaped by both government policies and Western influence, these changes are minor compared to the deep-rooted differences between Chinese and Western values, which continue to shape individuals across generations and borders.

The chapter also reviewed empirical studies of Chinese leaders in Western societies, focusing on the dynamics with non-Chinese followers. Implicit Leadership Theory explained how the same behaviours are perceived differently across cultures. Paternalistic leadership, rooted in Chinese tradition, showed mixed results—its authoritarian aspects could hinder relationships,

while its benevolent side sometimes enhanced employee wellbeing and reduced work–family conflict.

Later sections discussed how alignment between a leader’s cultural values and the host culture can improve team harmony but also exposed a persistent Western bias in leadership literature. The “bamboo ceiling” was introduced to explain the underrepresentation of East Asians in leadership despite being seen as effective once in those roles. This points to structural and cultural barriers. Importantly, I observed that despite a clear cultural mismatch, many Chinese individuals have still been selected for senior roles, suggesting they were recognised as capable and suitable. This observation raises key questions: What qualities helped these individuals rise into leadership? How did they succeed despite cultural obstacles? These are questions existing research has yet to answer, particularly in the context of New Zealand.

The chapter concluded with a critical review of the current literature and the gaps that remain. Much of the existing research falls into three common themes: comparisons between Chinese and Western leadership values (often using frameworks like GLOBE or Hofstede); career barriers for Asian migrants; and the impact of Chinese leadership in multinational organisations. While this may appear to be my biased view, the fact that hundreds of studies predominantly cover these three areas demonstrates a high degree of convergent research findings. Unfortunately, it is disheartening to note that very few of these studies have been conducted in New Zealand, particularly within the business context.

Although New Zealand acknowledges the economic contributions of its Chinese population, there is a lack of research on the intangible and non-monetary leadership contributions made by Chinese individuals. Current literature focuses heavily on value differences, but it fails to capture the subtle, culturally embedded leadership qualities that cannot be easily reduced to numbers or categories. These gaps demonstrate a clear need for new research.

This thesis seeks to explore the lived experiences of senior leaders with Chinese heritage in New Zealand. It aims to uncover the unique perspectives they bring to leadership, the value their cultural identity adds, and the challenges they have faced that could inform future leadership development for minorities. These questions remain unanswered in the current literature. In the next chapter, I will introduce the research methodology, including philosophical positioning and research design, to provide a clear framework for how this study was conducted.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology, including the chosen research philosophy and interview design that has been developed for this thesis. Guided by the principles of appreciative inquiry, this study aims to promote leaders with Chinese heritage by highlighting their contributions within New Zealand organisations. The following sections explain the rationale for using a qualitative data collection approach and describe how the interview questions were designed to elicit meaningful insights that address the core research questions. This chapter also details the processes of participant recruitment, data selection, and analysis, providing a clear overview of how the research was conducted.

3.1 Research Philosophy

3.1.1 *Appreciative Inquiry*

Appreciative inquiry is the guiding philosophy in this research, focusing on the positives of leaders with Chinese heritage and how to expand the recognition. The term consists of two words: appreciative and inquiry. "Appreciative" is a verb that refers to the act of recognising and adding value. It emphasises positivity that brings human satisfaction. "Inquiry" means to ask with the intention to learn and improve. This opens possibilities and enhances positivity. Putting both words together, appreciative inquiry is the belief or study that human beings or society operate at their best when the dialogue focuses on strengths and enhances them, rather than searching for mistakes and trying to fix them (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010).

Appreciative inquiry is based on the social constructivist theory that our perceptions of the world are formed through the interpretation and collective construction of reality (Gergen, 2023). Appreciative inquiry plays a vital role by emphasising what is working well and focusing on strengths rather than deficiencies. Moreover, another key principle is that appreciative inquiry is based on the anticipatory principle, which suggests that how people think about the future shapes their actions and outcomes (Reed, 2007). This means that by consistently reviewing what is working and focusing on positive outcomes, people will be empowered to believe that they can achieve their best aspirations. According to Reed, "What we focus on becomes our reality. By choosing to focus on what works, participants create a sense of possibility rather than limitation" (2007, p.28). In the context of this research, applying

an appreciative lens does more than simply highlight the contributions of leaders with Chinese heritage who hold senior positions, it also helps future generations of Chinese New Zealanders imagine themselves in those roles. By showcasing positive examples, this approach fosters hope, expands what is seen as possible, and encourages ambition. At the same time, society at large, including organisations and non-Chinese individuals can begin to recognise and value the contributions of Chinese professionals. This recognition reinforces inclusion and helps build a social and organisational environment that is more welcoming and appreciative of cultural diversity.

On the contrary, if the research focuses solely on the issues and provides solutions by interviewing those who experience bottlenecks in their careers, it may magnify the problem and potentially foster negative perceptions and enhance racial misunderstandings. The findings could be seen as polarising, and non-Chinese ethnic groups might feel targeted. Instead, this research should position Chinese leadership styles as one of the contributors to New Zealand's society, rather than portraying them as superior. Therefore, to increase the representation of Chinese individuals in senior positions, this research focuses on recognising and appreciating current or past senior Chinese leaders in New Zealand by examining their experiences. It aims to explore what has shaped their identities and how they are recognised by their organisations.

3.1.2 Interpretivism and Qualitative Study

Understanding people's individualised meanings and interpretations is the main goal of the philosophical position known as interpretivism (Packard, 2017). In considering this research topic, interpretivism is regarded as the most suitable guiding philosophy, as it aligns with the study's aim of appreciating and promoting Chinese leaders in New Zealand and gaining deeper insights into their unique qualities.

Interpretivism views reality as socially constructed rather than objectively given, emphasising the importance of understanding the world through individuals' subjective experiences (Packard, 2017). This approach aligns closely with the aims of this research, which seeks to explore how leaders with Chinese heritage make sense of their own leadership journeys within organisational context of New Zealand. The label "Chinese" is social constructions with multiple meanings shaped by historical, cultural, and social circumstances. Interpretivism recognises that concepts such as "leadership" and "Chinese" are fluid and context-dependent,

shaped by both individual backgrounds and the environments in which people operate (Schwandt, 1994). This philosophy supports my intention to uncover how participants interpret their upbringing, cultural values, and career pathways, and how these experiences have influenced their leadership styles at workplaces. Ultimately, this approach allows me to explore how participants construct their own narratives of success or challenges, and how these narratives can offer valuable insights into diverse leadership in New Zealand.

Additionally, qualitative analysis allows me to dive deeply into the lived experiences of participants through in-depth interviews. This method makes it possible to explore specific aspects of leadership and provides a comprehensive understanding of how leaders function within their circumstances. Through semi-structured interviews, I can better understand the complex nature of leadership dynamics and how cultural, organisational, and societal variables influence them (Packard, 2017).

While an interpretivist philosophy enables me to understand the experiences of leaders with Chinese heritage through their own explanations and perspectives, there are limitations to this approach that must be carefully considered. One key limitation is subjectivity, particularly during the data analysis stage (Bevir & Rhodes, 2012). Interpretive research is inherently shaped by the perspectives and biases of both the participants and the researcher, which may influence how data is interpreted and understood. For example, participants may present their experiences in a way that reflects personal or social desirability, and as the researcher, my own cultural background and assumptions could also influence how I interpret and analyse the data. To minimise these risks, I adopted several strategies. First, my interpretations were subject to rigorous review by my thesis supervisor to help identify any personal biases. Second, I engaged in ongoing reflection on my assumptions throughout the research process. Reflexivity helps ensure that the analysis remains as grounded and objective as possible, increasing the overall robustness and credibility of the study.

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Interview Questions

As highlighted in the literature review, New Zealand's increasingly diverse workforce underscores the importance of creating inclusive environments and ensuring equitable

opportunities for leadership across all cultural communities. Despite the significant contributions of the Chinese community to New Zealand's economy and society, as well as their high levels of educational attainment, this has not translated into greater representation in senior leadership roles. This persistent disparity suggests that meaningful inclusion in the corporate sector remains limited. This research is, therefore, both timely and important, as it aligns with New Zealand's broader national goals of embracing diversity and leveraging the strengths of culturally diverse leaders to drive innovation, cross-cultural collaboration, and sustainable growth. To promote and better understand Chinese leaders, the two primary research questions outlined in Chapter One are designed to explore their experience in New Zealand organisations:

1. How does Chinese heritage influence New Zealand executives' leadership thinking and practice?
2. What are the opportunities and constraints for advancing executive leadership in New Zealand for individuals with Chinese heritage?

In order to answer these research questions, a total of eight interview questions were carefully designed. They are listed on the participant information sheet (see Appendix B). These questions are intended to encourage storytelling from the interview participants and allow me to see the world through their eyes. Guided by the research philosophy of appreciative inquiry, the first interview question focused on understanding their responsibilities and contributions to the roles they held:

- Can you tell me how you came to your current role, and what you do in your role?

Additionally, some questions were asked to explore their upbringing to understand how traditional Chinese culture has influenced them and how their personal values have influenced their leadership thinking and behaviour at work. The questions included:

- Can you tell me a bit about your upbringing and how much culture has influenced your general values and behaviours?
- How would you describe your leadership style in terms of your personal values?
- How do you believe your cultural upbringing has shaped your approach to leadership in the corporate environment?

- Can you share an example of when Chinese culture may have influenced a leadership decision you made?

Then, to examine any challenges they may have faced due to their distinctive cultural heritage and to understand the constraints for Chinese individuals to progress in New Zealand business organisations, the below question was asked:

- Have you faced any specific challenges in your leadership role because of your cultural background?

To understand the current landscape of DEI policies in organisations and the participants' opinions on how to increase the representation of leaders with Chinese heritage, questions were asked in seeking insightful views from participants who have held senior leadership positions:

- How effective, in your opinion, have your organisation's diversity and inclusion initiatives been in promoting leadership diversity?
- In your opinion, what could and should be done by organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand to encourage more executive leaders with Chinese heritage?

As indicated in the participants' information, the interviews were not limited to predetermined questions. Follow-up questions were also asked to seek greater clarity, especially when participants shared interesting insights beyond the original interview framework. One such additional question was:

- During the interview, what question do you think I should have asked, but didn't?

This question created space for participants to reflect and contribute to the research process. I believe some of the questions raised by participants were particularly interesting, as they often prompted reflection on their own values—such as what they care most about or what they felt would add value to the current conversation. In some cases, questions raised by earlier participants were selectively shared with later participants to deepen the discussion. Examples of these participant-generated questions include:

- How does Chinese culture add value to New Zealand organisations?
- How do you think your leadership style is acceptable in the New Zealand and global context?

- Do you think your authentic leadership is appreciated and seen as a strength in organisations?
- Would you have been in a different position if you weren't Chinese? How have your experiences changed you?

Although the interview questions were initially asked in the order provided on the participant information sheet during the first few interviews, with more real-world experience and feedback from participants, I made some minor adjustments to the questions and their sequence. For instance, one participant suggested starting with a question about their upbringing to ease into the conversation. This worked well, as people tend to be more open and comfortable sharing their true selves when talking about their childhood. I also observed that participants were generally more talkative when discussing their families and childhood memories.

Additionally, I found that two of the original questions:

- How would you describe your leadership style in terms of your personal values?
- How do you believe your cultural upbringing has shaped your approach to leadership in the corporate environment?

were practically asking for the same information. Participants often found themselves repeating the same ideas or struggling to think of new responses. Therefore, in some of the later interviews, I occasionally skipped one of these questions if the participant had already provided enough insight to enrich the study.

Throughout the interviews, I also asked follow-up questions to seek clarification and dig deeper into participants' perspectives. I often asked "why?" such as "Why do you think that is?" or "Why does that matter to you?" This helped me better understand not just their views, but also how their perspectives were formed over time.

3.2.2 Data Collection Method

To explore the lived experiences of leaders with Chinese heritage in New Zealand, this study adopted a semi-structured interview approach as the primary method of data collection. This method was chosen for its balance between structure and flexibility—offering enough guidance

to address the key research questions, while still allowing space for participants to share their stories in their own words.

Unlike structured interviews, which can be too rigid and restrict participants to predefined answers, or unstructured interviews, which may lack consistency and focus, semi-structured interviews strike a valuable middle ground (Saunders et al., 2016). They allowed me to follow a set of core questions aligned with the research objectives while also encouraging open-ended conversation, deeper reflection, and spontaneous insights. This flexibility was essential for discussing complex and personal topics such as leadership, identity, and cultural influence.

Semi-structured interviews also provided a respectful and conversational environment. Participants were able to express themselves freely, and I could ask follow-up questions when interesting or unexpected themes emerged. This not only enriched the data but also built trust and rapport, making space for more meaningful reflections. As Oplatka (2018) noted, this method is particularly well-suited to qualitative research aiming to understand how individuals make sense of their experiences.

In total, 11 interviews were conducted. Seven took place in person, while four were held online via Zoom to accommodate participants' locations. All interviewees were asked for permission to record the sessions; ten agreed. One participant preferred not to be recorded; therefore, detailed notes were taken during the conversation and later compiled into a transcript, which the participant reviewed and approved.

3.2.3 Participant Recruitment and Ethical Considerations

Ethical consent was obtained from the Waikato Management School (WMS) before formally inviting any participants to the study. Documents were sent to WMS Ethics Committee for consideration, including sample participants' information sheets, consent forms, and application forms (See Appendix B, C and D). These documents stated the research objectives, the strict confidentiality measures put in place to protect participants' personal and professional information, as well as a full description of their rights as research participants. Several potential ethical issues and solutions were highlighted in this application form to ensure the safety and well-being of participants as well as the integrity of the study.

Due to the nature of the study focusing on searching for senior executive leaders with Chinese backgrounds, it was difficult to recruit suitable candidates because of the small candidate pool in New Zealand. This was clearly demonstrated in the early stages of the search, as shown in the research background in Chapter One, where a review of large companies' websites revealed that less than 2% of the total were assumed to be of Chinese descent based on their names. As a result, the data collection phase took more than half of the time allocated to completing this thesis. Due to the challenges in recruiting senior leaders within the corporate landscape, the research needed to expand its criteria outlined in the participant sheet and include individuals who may not have fully met these conditions. Consequently, the database included insights from one participant from the public sector and another freelance professional who is currently involved with a local board. Although these two participants may not hold senior positions in corporate settings, their experience in diversity and inclusion within New Zealand organisations is still valuable to enrich the study. The remaining nine participants are either currently in or have held senior executive roles in the New Zealand business environment, with experience ranging from 15 to 40 years. Their valuable experience in the corporate world contributes to understanding the challenges and opportunities for Chinese professionals in New Zealand.

Of the 18 individuals I contacted, 11 agreed to participate—seven male and four female. One declined, stated they did not believe their experience would add meaningful value to the study, and six did not respond. Each participant received an information sheet upon initial contact, outlining the purpose of the study and confirming that their participation was entirely voluntary.

Participant E, G, H and K were contacted through my thesis supervisor's connections, and two of these individuals had expressed interest in participating in the research long before the study commenced. However, a formal introduction and detailed information about the research study were provided only after the study had received ethical consent from WMS.

Participant A, B and C were identified after I reviewed the board of directors and senior management teams on the company websites. Friend requests were then sent to those individuals found on LinkedIn, along with a friendly message inviting them to participate in the interview. Two candidates quickly accepted the friend request, and further details were sent to them via email. One candidate responded months later and explained that they were busy finishing their role after a decade of working for the same organisation and that the research invitation got lost in the storm of work responsibilities. I then contacted this participant again

six months later, and they expressed interest in participating in the interview since their job had concluded. Therefore, this interview occurred much later than the others.

Participant F was referred and recommended by individuals who had already been interviewed. This participant was considered a good fit for the topic, and their contact information was shared with me by the participant who had completed their interviews.

To find more candidates, I attended a business symposium that attracted many ethnic leaders. Participant J was introduced to me through a mutual connection and later invited via LinkedIn. They went on to provide valuable insights for this study.

The final two participants (Participant D and I) were identified as desirable candidates before the commencement of the research due to their contributions not only to the Chinese community but also to the wider New Zealand society. They are well known and respected by many. One participant's contact information was shared through a mutual connection, while the other was reached when I emailed the company where the participant serves on the board. Because their seniority was somewhat intimidating for me, they were interviewed last, after I have gained more interviewing experience with earlier participants.

This research adhered to strict ethical standards to ensure that all participants were treated with respect, and their rights were protected throughout the study. Prior to the interviews, each participant received the participant information sheet outlining the purpose of the study, the nature of their involvement, any potential risks, and their right to withdraw at any time, up to four weeks after the interview. Their participation was entirely voluntary.

Throughout the data collection process, the well-being and comfort of participants were prioritised. I remained mindful of cultural sensitivity and made a conscious effort to avoid imposing any personal or cultural biases during both the interview process and subsequent data analysis. Respect for each participant's cultural background was central to the ethical approach of this study, and care was taken to represent their views in a fair, respectful, and non-judgmental manner.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection began. Each participant signed a consent form on the day of the interview, which also included permission to be audio or video recorded. This process ensured that participants were fully informed and comfortable with their involvement in the study. Once participants agreed to take part in the

study, they were offered the choice of being interviewed either in person or online via Zoom, depending on their preference. While participants based outside of Hamilton or Auckland were interviewed via Zoom due to geographic distance, I respectfully offered to travel to Auckland and meet participants at their workplace or at a location of their choosing to ensure they felt comfortable in the interview setting. Creating a safe and familiar environment was considered essential for encouraging open and honest dialogue during the interviews.

To promote accuracy and transparency, each interview was transcribed and sent back to the respective participant for review. Two participants requested amendments, and these changes were incorporated into the final data set included in the thesis. This step helped ensure that participants' perspectives were accurately and respectfully represented. All data collected were securely stored in a password-protected OneDrive folder accessible only to me and my supervisor.

To protect participant confidentiality, each interviewee was assigned an alphabetical code. No names will appear in the thesis or any academic publications, conference presentations, or reports stemming from this research. This anonymity enabled participants to speak freely and honestly without fear of repercussion. Once I have completed my thesis writing, the transcript will be transferred and stored on my personal computer. I will keep this data for the next five years, providing access only to myself and my supervisor for potential future uses, such as writing reports, presenting findings, and publication. After five years, this data will be permanently deleted, and no one will be able to access the information I collected.

3.2.4 Data Analysis

The interviews ranged from 25 minutes to one and a half hours. AI tools were used to assist with transcription and condensing of the transcripts, such as removing filler words. However, the integrity of the data was maintained, and the meaning of participants' responses remained intact under ethical guidelines. To ensure the accuracy of the data, each transcript—after edits for clarity and sentence flow—was sent back to the participants for review. This allowed them to confirm that their intended meaning was accurately represented.

Although I was aware of qualitative data analysis tools such as NVivo, no additional technical software was used during the analysis phase. Instead, all transcripts were printed, and I used

different coloured highlighters and pens to mark and annotate the physical copies. Highlighted quotes were categorised into themes. The printed hard copy will be kept in my bag when not in use and will be destroyed upon completion of the thesis. To better understand the data, I also created a mind map and organised recurring themes into four main categories across different notebook pages: values, leadership, challenges, and opportunities. Later in the process, I discovered a strong correlation between participants' values and their leadership behaviour. Their leadership styles reflected the personal and cultural values they had been raised with. As a result, in the findings chapter, values and leadership are presented together as one thematic subsection.

This manual method of analysis had both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it allowed me to engage with the data more deeply. Working manually with printed transcripts, highlighters, and handwritten notes created a more intimate and nuanced understanding of the material. Additionally, using mind maps and coloured pens encouraged creative, non-linear thinking, which helped me identify patterns and relationships, such as the link between values and leadership. However, this approach was also time-consuming and potentially less efficient. There was a risk of inconsistency, as the grouping of themes was subjective and based on my own interpretation. It is possible that the results might differ if the data were analysed using digital tools or by other researchers. Nevertheless, despite these limitations, I found the experience rewarding. This hands-on method enhanced my academic writing and analytical abilities, skills that I believe will be valuable in many aspects of my personal and professional life.

3.3 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I outlined the research methodology used in this study. Guided by Appreciative Inquiry, the research aimed to uncover the values and contributions of existing leaders with Chinese heritage, to inform and strengthen inclusive leadership development in New Zealand's corporate environment. A qualitative approach was chosen because it enabled the collection of rich, in-depth data that reflected participants' worldviews and perspectives.

Eleven semi-structured interviews were conducted, either in person or online via Zoom, with participants' consent to be recorded. All transcripts were sent back to the participants for review to ensure the accuracy of the data and to meet ethical standards. I also described the data

analysis process, which involved manually reviewing the printed transcripts using coloured pens to highlight key quotes and group recurring themes. This hands-on method helped me make sense of the data and identify meaningful patterns.

The chapter also explained the development of the interview questions, which were aligned with the primary research objectives: to explore how Chinese cultural values influence leadership behaviour, and to identify the challenges and opportunities faced by leaders with Chinese heritage in New Zealand. In conclusion, conducting this research has helped me develop valuable academic, analytical, and interpersonal skills that will benefit me in both my personal and professional life.

The next chapter presents the research findings that emerged from the methodology described above. It will also provide thematic analysis that illustrates the lived experiences, leadership styles, and reflections of the participants.

Chapter Four: Findings

Followed the research method mentioned in the previous chapter, this chapter below will present findings derived from the interview data, highlighting and appreciating the unique perspectives of Chinese leaders living in New Zealand. The findings are presented in four sections: upbringing and career background; values and leadership styles; challenges and outcomes; and contribution and opportunities. These sections aim to shed light on the primary research questions by exploring participants' early life experiences, career paths, key values influencing their leadership, the challenges they encountered, and their perspectives on diversity and inclusion in New Zealand's corporate environment.

All findings are aimed at shedding light on these primary research questions:

1. How does Chinese heritage influence New Zealand executives' leadership thinking and practice?
2. What are the opportunities and constraints for advancing executive leadership in New Zealand with Chinese heritage?

4.1 Upbringing and Career Background

Our perspectives are shaped not only by cultural values but also by our individual experiences. To better understand the worldview of each interview participant, it is important to provide context about their background. Although the participants in this study share a common cultural heritage as part of the overseas Chinese in New Zealand, their experiences and interpretations can vary widely. These differences arise from the unique ways in which they interact with the world through what they hear, say, and see. As such, one person's perspective may not necessarily reflect another's, even within the same cultural group.

Out of a total of 11 participants, four were born in New Zealand and are second or third-generation Chinese New Zealanders. Four are migrants from Malaysia or Singapore, where their ancestors migrated to South Asia from China, and they later chose to move to New Zealand. Two migrants come from Taiwan with families. Finally, one migrant is from mainland China. All participants came from a variety of industries, including technology, property investment, public service, healthcare agriculture, legal, and banking sectors. Participant codes

were assigned based on place of birth rather than the order in which interviews were conducted. As a result, the participant descriptions below are not presented in strict alphabetical order. Some participants who were interviewed later may appear earlier in the presentation if they share the same place of birth.

Participants A, B, C, and D were born and raised in New Zealand as second or third-generation Chinese New Zealanders. All their families have had small businesses, which seems to be prevalent among Chinese families as the primary means of livelihood in the 20th century.

Participant A is a senior leader on the executive team of a company that is listed on the NZX50. Having worked for the company for many years, they were approached and promoted to their current position. They oversee a growing division of the company that brings significant financial gains to the organisation, making it a critical part of the business. Early in their career, Participant A started as a technician in the IT operations and later obtained an MBA degree to better understand and navigate the business side of things. Participant A's ancestors are from Guangzhou and came to New Zealand for gold mining in Otago. They later found ways to bring the immediate family to New Zealand. Participant A shared that the family values of hard work and relationships have significantly influenced their life from an early age. This influence stems partly from their Chinese heritage and partly from being the child of migrants who had to work diligently to navigate life in New Zealand.

Participant B is further along in their career; they were approached by their connections to join the current role as a board member of a company listed on the NZX50. Their career began in the investment market, where they led a high-profile team before founding their own investment company, which was sold prior to the economic crisis in 2008. They decided to explore various new roles as they did not want to retire too soon. Participant B's grandparents came from Guangzhou to New Zealand during the gold rush. Both of their parents were born and raised in New Zealand, making Participant B a third-generation Chinese Kiwi. Their grandparents started a fruit and vegetable shop, which their father later continued in the same industry but with a separate business. Participant B and their family consider themselves well-acclimated and speak English most of the time at home. Moreover, Participant B highlighted that earlier generations of Chinese immigrants in New Zealand were predominantly involved in small businesses and entrepreneurial ventures, rather than in professional or corporate careers. As a result, their generation represents one of the first to enter the professional workforce and be considered for leadership roles within mainstream organisations. This shift

marks a significant change in how individuals of Chinese heritage are represented in business and corporate environments.

Participant C served as General Counsel and Company Secretary for a company listed on the NZX 50. They were responsible for all legal-related requirements for this firm. Despite their lack of motivation to pursue the senior leadership position, they were appointed as General Counsel when the previous one left. Participant C stated they were never aspired to climb the corporate ladder, but being authentic and building a close team was their primary focus at work. They also mentioned that their leadership style reflects their upbringing. Participant C was born and raised in New Zealand to an immigrant mother who came to New Zealand in her 20s, while their father was born in New Zealand. They were told that the grandparents came to New Zealand for gold. Like many other children of Chinese immigrants, Participant C was expected to help with the small family business after school, understanding that their parents had sacrificed for the family and instilled a strong work ethic within them, which later shaped their career.

Participant D was born and raised in the coastal region of the North Island to immigrant parents from Guangzhou and Hong Kong. They developed an interest in language at an early age and are now fluent in English, Cantonese, and Te Reo. Being a linguist has benefited Participant D later in their career. Although they did not have opportunities in tertiary education early on due to looking after the market garden business, Participant D forged their way into politics at a relatively early age. Participant D had a prominent career as a politician and won local elections several times during their time in office. Currently, Participant D serves on the board of directors of a company listed on the NZX50. Now, Participant D participates in various activities as they feel a responsibility to contribute and give back to society. They seek ways to connect with young people, believing they are the future influence.

Participants E, F, G, and K were born and raised in Malaysia and Singapore. These countries have a large Chinese diaspora population that moved to Southeast Asia centuries ago. All of these participants' ancestors came from southern China and have preserved their cultural heritage as it was in their home country. While some participants are not fluent in Mandarin, most can understand or speak Cantonese or Hokkien, which are Southern Chinese dialects.

Participant E came to New Zealand for tertiary education in the 1970s as an international student. They grew up in Malaysia and started their career as a young professional in

accounting. Later, they became a company secretary for one of the largest listed companies in New Zealand. Currently, they are the founder of a technology firm based in the Waikato region, providing services that include both software and hardware solutions. Over the years, the company has helped numerous customers improve their efficiency, including providing solutions for the medical care sector. With a strong team dedicated to solving technical issues, Participant E primarily holds the title of head of the business and actively participates in business networking. Like many other Chinese diasporas who left China in search of a better life, Participant E's father left home at the age of 13 due to famine in Guangzhou and eventually settled in Malaysia, where Participant E was born. Due to poverty and a traumatic childhood, Participant E has a strong determination to eliminate poverty wherever they go, and they are committed to helping the community. Participant E was elected to a local trust involved in distributing funds to support the local community. The value of helping others continues to hold true at leadership positions for Participant E.

Participant F had a legal background and served as General Counsel in an organisation listed in the NZX50. They are now an investor and the founder of a health tech investment firm. Participant F grew up in Malaysia to Chinese parents who have acculturated well in Western society when they moved to New Zealand. Yet the Chinese cultural influence is still apparent, and some of it has been passed down to their children. Participant F has a positive view of the future of DEI in New Zealand, as they have observed that the younger generation has had more opportunities for cross-cultural interactions. This will help build understanding of cultural differences and break down barriers to foster better intercultural collaboration.

Participant G was primarily involved in the public sector, including the Ministry of Public and Communities and the Ministry of Ethnic Communities. Participant G has held various advisory roles, offering cultural and strategic advice to ministers. Although they did not hold any significant corporate role at the time of the interview, they were still considered valuable participants due to their extensive experience working with the ethnic community. Participant G's ancestors moved to Singapore one or two generations ago from Fujian (Origin of Hokkien). Before coming to New Zealand, Participant G grew up in Singapore, which is strongly influenced by Eastern culture. Moving to New Zealand has led them to change certain behaviors for the better in response to the new environment. Participant G views this adaptability as a strength of Chinese culture and believes that global leaders should possess the ability to lead in any context.

Participant K was born in Singapore and moved to New Zealand in the early 1990s. They were raised in a traditional Chinese family where social order and personal integrity were strongly emphasised. After arriving in New Zealand, Participant K struggled to find job, even though they held a Master's degree. However, with resilience and perseverance, Participant K built a successful and diverse career in local government, consulting, and academia. They became one of the few professionals of Chinese heritage to hold a senior management role in a public sector organisation. Their career has included work in policy, governance, and strategic planning, often navigating cultural complexities and advocating for inclusion and representation. In recent years, Participant K has also taught at a tertiary institution, sharing their knowledge and supporting the development of emerging professionals. Reflecting on their journey, Participant K expressed a sense of responsibility to support the next generation and encouraged others from minority backgrounds to pursue leadership roles.

Participant J and I are both migrants from Taiwan who moved to New Zealand before the year 2000 and have spent most of their lives in Aotearoa. Participant J is now a partner in a law firm in New Zealand, primarily dealing with international clients who come to invest, migrate, or set up businesses. They had their own legal company, which merged into the current organisation five years ago. The merger brought significant financial benefits to the company, it opened more opportunities for Chinese professionals due to its evident success. Despite this, Participant J still claimed to face prejudice and referred to themselves as an “accidental leader” because they were never expected to be at the top. Participant J argued that New Zealand organisations should learn globally in terms of talent acquisition to break the norm of only hiring those who are traditionally seen as a good fit. Having moved from Taipei to New Zealand, Participant J obtained a law degree and faced many challenges as a migrant early in their career, struggling to gain the same recognition due to their foreign background. Participant J adopted a soft approach to leadership, focusing on helping others and their behaviour is heavily influenced by their past experiences.

Participant I was born in Taiwan and immigrated to New Zealand with family at a young age. Their upbringing was marked by a strong emphasis on education and resilience, shaped by their experience and family value. Participant I excelled in school from a young age and went on to pursue a legal education and built a successful career as a law expert. Over the years, they have founded and led several initiatives aimed at improving legal access and multicultural inclusion in New Zealand. Participant I have also served on boards, advocating for diversity and systemic

change. Influenced by their parents, Participant I developed strong values of helping others in need, with generosity and loyalty at the core.

Finally, Participant H was the only migrant from Mainland China. They arrived in New Zealand as a young international student and now lead the Asian business division of a large organisation. They are responsible for major decision-making, including planning, hiring, and sponsoring cultural events. Participant H has made significant contributions to bridging the Pākehā and Asian communities in terms of business, and their team has done crucial work in increasing cultural understanding. Participant H is ambitious and has always wanted to follow in their family's footsteps by helping those in need. Participant H stated that many Chinese cultural values at work, which both benefit and hinder their ability to progress in New Zealand society. Additionally, Participant H expressed that brain drain is a significant issue for New Zealand, as the country is not only losing its Kiwi talent but also many well-qualified migrant talents.

Through participants' storytelling about their upbringing and career progression, it became evident that their leadership styles and worldviews were closely shaped by their lived experiences. How they arrived at their current and past positions, their personal backgrounds, and the industries they have worked in all contributed to the kind of leadership they practice today. While some details have been intentionally kept vague to protect participant anonymity, these background summaries provide important context. The following section on values and leadership styles will explore how participants' personal values, shaped by their upbringing and life experiences, relate to their leadership behaviours and approaches.

4.2 Values and Leadership style

The following section explores the values and leadership behaviours demonstrated by the participants. Recurring themes were grouped into categories based on shared meanings or strong connections and are presented under relevant subheadings. While the participants all shared a Chinese cultural background, it became clear that their leadership behaviours and styles reflected individual differences shaped by context. Their perspectives and approaches to leadership were strongly shaped by their life experiences, upbringing, and career progression.

4.2.1 Hard Work Does Pay Off

Almost all participants mentioned how much they value hard work and personal growth, which can be clearly attributed to their upbringing, particularly their parents' influence. Participants A, B, C, and D who are Chinese-born individuals raised in New Zealand, shared that they began working in the family business at a young age. They were expected to help out after school, as their parents came from an underprivileged background where making a living was the family's primary focus. Participant C expressed that the value of hard work came naturally to them, stated, "We all knew we had to work hard and make something of ourselves because our father has sacrificed so much for us." For many, working hard is not just a personal value but a deeply ingrained way of honouring their parents and acknowledging the sacrifices made for their future. Participant D recalled just how early and intensely they began working, "We worked hard; we had a whole day off in total, half a day for the A&P (Agricultural and Pastoral) show...and about half a day off for Christmas. My brother and I started working when we were about five years old."

The importance of a strong work ethic was emphasised not only by children of long-settled migrant families but also by first-generation Chinese migrants themselves. As first-generation migrants, Participant H reflected that the value of hard work was instilled through their upbringing, while Participant J viewed it as a necessary strategy for survival in a highly competitive society. As a result, both have maintained this mentality of "trying your best" even after moving to New Zealand. "I come from a society where everything is highly competitive. You have to prepare yourself well just to keep up, let alone excel. So, you get used to being quite strict and disciplined with yourself," said Participant J.

The values of personal growth, namely education, were also emphasised by many participants. Education plays a core role in their upbringing, most of them excelled in school due to the value they place on hard work. Many of their parents worked hard to provide a better life for their children. As Participant A explained, "as far as they understood, a better life meant you needed education, which they never had." Because their parents came from poor or underprivileged backgrounds, they were determined that their children would not follow the same path or suffer from a lack of education and opportunities. The story of participant E highlighted this mentality of their parents with a touching story:

My father was a very smart man. He told me that when he worked as a shepherd—rather, he looked after flocks of goats [sic]—there was a school nearby. Whenever he had free time, he would run to the school, peek through the windows, and watch the children being educated. That’s how he learnt to read and write. He realised that the only way for our family to escape poverty was through education. He would beg, borrow, and even steal to gather enough money to send his children to school and buy books. He would sometimes skip meals to afford it.

This mindset has been passed down through generations among Chinese people from various regions. Participant M noted that many of their Kiwi friends do not understand the level of investment they have made in their daughter’s education. However, in Chinese families, education is viewed as a long-term investment—one that is expected to yield future returns. As a result, academic achievement tends to be valued more highly among Chinese communities compared to mainstream Kiwi culture. As Participant E observed, “They are often more academically inclined, less involved in sports, and more focused on scholarly pursuits.” Participant D, who spent much of their youth working in the family’s market garden business to help make a living, reflected on the sacrifices made at the expense of formal education. Despite not having the opportunity to pursue schooling earlier in life, they now actively seek opportunities to improve themselves. The deeply rooted value of self-improvement and respect for education continues to guide their actions. As they expressed, “My objective now is to get as many qualifications as possible, because I didn’t have any when I was younger.”

Because education and hard work are highly valued, and most participants have excelled academically, these formative experiences have shaped their mindset and leadership style—particularly as they have earned their positions and recognition through consistent effort and perseverance. The high level of personal discipline they uphold is often expected of their team members as well. As Participant K noted, “As a leader, I tend to expect the same kind of discipline and order from my staff.” Consequently, a strong performance orientation and a pragmatic approach have become guiding principles in how they lead and engage with others in the workplace. As Participant C affirmed, “When I reflect back, I can see how that work ethic has shaped my career.” Because of their growth mindset, they help create a work culture that encourages individuals to perform at their best and seek personal growth. Participant A stated that being stretched and encouraging people to step out of their comfort zones is crucial for organisations that thrive on innovation and implement changes that could significantly

impact customer lives. Participant A argued, “You're always stretched, and that's where your growth comes from. If you're comfortable, you're not learning, right?” This mindset also appeared to enhance team productivity, as illustrated by Participant J’s experience at work: “We (our team) were far more productive than our colleagues (other teams), while the culture here (in New Zealand) is quite different—more relaxed.”

Leaders with Chinese heritage often place a strong emphasis on work ethic and personal growth, which contributes to their overall effectiveness and productivity. One way they maintain this effectiveness is through a direct and pragmatic leadership style—being clear about expectations, focusing on priorities, and avoiding unnecessary distractions. This can be seen as a form of solution-driven leadership that values professionalism and accountability. Both Participants C and F shared that they prefer to be direct, even when it involves difficult conversations. As Participant F explained to their employees, “Don’t bring me a problem; bring me a solution.” Similarly, Participant C follows the principle, “You address it, fix it, and move on—no grudges,” underscoring a commitment to efficiency and a forward-looking mindset.

4.2.2 Teamwork is Dreamwork

Spending time together and maintaining close ties with immediate family emerged as a key theme shared by all interview participants. Many described growing up in multigenerational households or living in close proximity to family members. Even for those who did not live under the same roof, strong familial bonds were sustained through weekly shared meals, living in the same suburb, or even sharing resources like freezers. For participants whose parents operated businesses, it was common for them to contribute from a young age. As Participant A remarked, “Working together harmoniously, you get better outcomes than just doing it yourself.” Especially for those early migrants, three generations relied on a single source of income, making family collaboration essential. This way of life fostered a habit of mutual support that often extended beyond the family business and continued into family traditions, such as Chinese New Year celebrations or ancestral memorials. As Participant G explained, “It’s about the principle of reunion,” a value deeply embedded in Chinese culture. Participant D also recalled growing up with frequent family gatherings—weddings, funerals, and other occasions where “supporting each other was key.” Likewise, Participant I highlighted the importance of loyalty within the family, stating, “Loyalty is an important value for me. I do

think that comes from Confucian culture... we (Chinese) are very loyal to our families.” For many Chinese families, offering care and support in times of difficulty is seen as a core expression of love.

For many participants, being together not only increases productivity but also has emotional significance. This reflects a broader cultural emphasis on reciprocity and prioritising collective well-being. Participant K pointed out that this mentality was also emphasised at school and during national service when they lived in Singapore, “We were taught to prioritise the group and make sacrifices for others.” Additionally, Participant D shared that the mentality of care and reciprocity was extended locally for collective benefit, where people helped each other:

Our customers were good to us; they supported our shop. So, it felt right to reciprocate and give back to our community. One of the things my parents did was that whenever there was a Māori funeral—tangihanga—they would take a truckload of vegetables to the marae. Those are enduring things I still remember.

Such stories highlight how generosity and mutual respect can strengthen intercultural relationships within New Zealand's diverse communities. Participant K emphasised the importance of connections with one another, noted that the Chinese philosophy of *guanxi* (relationship) signifies that relationships matter to most people, “Humans are social by nature, and when we feel isolated, we struggle.”

The principle of collectivism was also evident in participants' emphasis on respect, particularly towards elders, which reflected a deep commitment to relational harmony and the broader good of the group. Participant A explained their respect for elders by acknowledging “what they've done for you and their contributions.” Meanwhile, Participant C adopted this value from a young age, influenced by their parents and aunts, who made an effort to maintain respectful relationships with their grandparents. As a result, respecting elders has become a normal practice in their daily lives. On the other hand, Participant I, influenced by the values from their home country as an immigrant, believes that “it’s important to respect those in important positions.” Participant K also draws this value from the broader social influences present in their home culture:

I was born in Singapore and raised in a traditional Chinese family influenced by Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. These philosophies emphasise respect and

obedience toward elders, which applies to the home, school, and work environments. We were taught from an early age to conduct ourselves morally and to follow rules.

By embracing and practising the values of building relationships and respect, many participants cultivate a sense of belonging and promote a culture of collaboration at work, which has become part of their corporate leadership. Essentially, their upbringing has significantly influenced their leadership styles. Participant C noted, “My leadership style reflects my upbringing.” Similarly, Participant D stated, “Those values of collectivism guide how I interact with my family and how I lead, so I tend to lead collaboratively.” Caring for employees is akin to caring for family members; as Participant C put it, “You nurture them like you would your family—you want them to succeed. That’s always been important to me.”

To create a sense of belonging at work, leaders with Chinese heritage, such as Participant D, F, G, H, and K, strive to maintain good relationships with their followers. This includes sharing food, inviting people to their homes, and creating networking opportunities outside of work to foster connections among team members. Participant H argues that this Chinese value resembles the Māori principle of Manakitanga, which emphasises hospitality and bringing people together through food (Kai). Participant K expressed that this approach has become a fundamental part of their leadership identity: “I often shout lunch or engage in similar gestures. You could call it building relationships, but to me, it’s just part of how I lead.” Participant D took a different approach at work to enhance collective achievement and build relationships. They believe that leaders should not try to handle all the work on their own, even if they are fully capable. “I’m confident doing everything. If I have to do it, I’ll do it. But I also like to ask people to help... My leadership style is more inclusive because there’s no ‘I’ in ‘team,’ really.” Moreover, Participant J builds relationships with followers by showing personal care in the workplace through having small conversations and asking people about their hobbies and family situations. They stated:

I don’t see people as purely transactional. I want to maintain that relationship beyond our professional time together. I think genuine human connections, the appreciation of opportunities to get to know someone, and shared memories are important. I don’t want to waste or lose those relationships.

However, Participant J also discussed the challenges of valuing personal connections in professional settings. They noted that when individuals approach them for assistance in

securing a job, it can be difficult to refuse their requests due to cultural nuances that dictate a norm of helping others in need. As a result, they often feel obligated to assist, even though it is acceptable to say no, as in New Zealand, personal effort and achievement typically take precedence over nepotism. Participant J explained, “Perhaps it’s because I remember how hard it was for me when no one would even open a door for me, and I had to send out 311 faxes just to get an interview. That experience stays with me.” The same principle applies to Participant G, who believes in reciprocity, “If someone helps you, you help them. That’s something I still carry with me.” Similarly, Participant I stated, “I’m generous with my family and staff when I have the chance. If you have the opportunity to give, you should try to do that.”

Participant H explained the value of connection from a business perspective, which +creating a welcoming environment helps people do business together, and foster opportunities for learning from each other and thrive together is mutually beneficial. They also pointed out that, “this is slightly different from Western culture, where commerce often takes precedence over cultural connections. In Chinese culture, it’s more about culturalising commerce rather than commercialising culture.”

4.2.3 Put Yourself in Someone else's Shoes

While participants valued effectiveness and pragmatism, particularly shown by their solution-focused leadership styles and high-performance expectations, some also highlighted the importance of practising empathetic leadership. This approach involves considering others' perspectives, much like the old Chinese proverb, “己所不欲，勿施于人,” which means, “Do not do to others what you don't want to be done to you.”

Participant E explained that the principle of empathy comes from their poor background, and they do not wish for anyone else to suffer. They said, “I want to eradicate poverty wherever I go, I want to do good and give back to the community.” Hence in a leadership position, Participant E would always be compassionate with others' perspectives, they emphasise the significance of work-life balance in looking after the well-being of employees and their families. Participant E stated:

Family comes first. If an employee's family is sick, they should take care of them first. That includes taking care of themselves. They don't need to provide me with an excuse for missing work, just do what needs to be done.

Similarly, Participant J and I's experiences stem from significant challenges they faced in the past, especially in their legal careers. These experiences have become an important part of their lives, motivating them to help others whenever possible. Participant I shared:

My own experience of being in need of assistance, and having no one help me or my family, made me realise that when you find someone who genuinely needs help—someone who has tried their very best but can't do any more—and you're in a position to help them, then you must help them.

In contrast, Participant G's sense of empathy did not stem from a rough upbringing, but rather just naturally resonated with them and shaped their leadership style. They commented, "I think servant leadership, in a way, kind of resonates with my personality and how I see things." Participant G also noted that being assertive is necessary for ensuring efficiency and maintaining pragmatic in their managerial role as a leader; however, acting empathetically reflects who they are as an authentic person. Additionally, participant H learned empathy from observing the impact that their family had on others in leadership positions. They admired their family members who take responsibility for looking after people and, therefore, wanted to mirror their achievements and make a significant impact on others through empathy and positive influence, rather than authoritarian power. Participant H noted that empathic leadership has helped them navigate cultural diversity at New Zealand workplace. Being a migrant has allowed them to understand how both Chinese and New Zealand cultures operate, therefore, they often feel a sense of responsibility to bridge the gap in cultural understanding between the two groups. Participant H stated:

Asian employees often feel they aren't given enough opportunities, while non-Asian employees may feel unsure about how to engage with different cultures. Both groups can feel vulnerable and afraid of making mistakes. My role is to bridge these gaps and create an inclusive environment.

While some leaders, like Participants C and F, believe that being straightforward is necessary to enhance productivity, other participants brought up the concept of "face" in relation to understanding others' perspectives and take a non-direct approach in intercultural

communications. The concept of "face" involves choosing to withhold criticism to maintain harmony, preserve relationships, and protect others from potential embarrassment or emotional discomfort. Empathy, which involves being considerate of others, is about giving "face" to those around us. This value is especially prominent among leaders with Chinese heritage. Participant J mentioned, "I value the ability to give people a safe space by keeping some of my strong opinions to myself. I always create or maintain this artificial harmony, even when I may not agree." Participant G explained the practicing of "face" in a different context. When communicating achievements, they emphasised less on the "I" and instead carefully used the words "we" or "you" to describe successes, saying things like "we did it" or "you did it" to uplift others by sharing the sense of accomplishment. This was also prominent in Participant D's political career where commentary and acknowledgement of others' work are crucial as a leader.

While the notion of "face" is assumed to be exclusive in Chinese cultures, Participant J shared an observation that the practice of giving and receiving "face" is universal across all cultures. "Now that I mainly work with non-Chinese colleagues, I find this approach even more important. Every culture values face, whether or not they have a specific word for it," said Participant J.

One of the purposes of giving "face" was to maintain harmony. Although the concept was not explicitly mentioned in all interviews, Participants A and E both emphasised the importance of fostering harmony through open and clear communication as leaders in the workplace. Participant E stated that open communication was vital for reducing conflict: "I see that most disputes in the workplace stem from the other party not understanding your assumptions." They believed that keeping an open mind and "putting yourself in someone else's shoes" were key to addressing misunderstandings. As leaders, they aimed to help employees stay focused on the bigger picture and understand what truly mattered or what the team was trying to achieve. Building mutual understanding and appreciation among colleagues was seen as essential in the workplace—and a key responsibility of leadership.

4.2.4 Gold Will Always Shine

The value of humility was a common theme observed among a number of interview participants. The Chinese proverb, "gold will always shine," was taught to many young Chinese

children to instil patience, hard work, and staying low-key, with the belief that opportunity will eventually come as a recognition of their efforts.

Participant C, who lives by the value of humility, stated, “You just do what you can, there’s no expectation of special recognition.” Among these leaders of Chinese heritage, humility appeared to shape how they communicated their achievements. Rather than actively seeking promotions or pay raises, some believed that genuine capability would be recognised without the need for self-promotion. Participant B expressed a similar view, said, “People recognise your reputation, appreciate your expertise, and you get invited to opportunities.” This perspective may have been reinforced by their own experiences as both Participants B and C were invited into senior leadership roles based on their performance and reputation, rather than through self-advocacy or deliberate career advancement efforts. Their stories suggest a deep-rooted belief that leadership opportunities come as a result of others’ recognition rather than personal pursuit.

Moreover, Participants A, B, C, and G all explicitly mentioned that their drive to stay in leadership roles was never about personal gain. Participants A and G emphasised that fostering inclusion and encouraging collective achievement was more important than having positional power. As Participant A affirmed, “I value celebrating the outcomes that we’ve achieved together more than putting an individual on a pedestal.”

Being born overseas and having been exposed to a Chinese cultural environment, Participant G expressed a strong inclination towards humility in their communication. They stated, “in discussing achievements, there’s a tendency to be more on the humble side. I often talk about collective achievements, which comes naturally to me.” However, living in New Zealand with contrasting cultural environment regarding this aspect, Participant G shared an experience where feedback from their mentor highlighted that they did not emphasise their individual accomplishments enough on their CV. Having lived in both cultures, Participant G commented on their observations while working in New Zealand regarding the cultural difference:

I was talking to one of my colleagues, who is also from the Chinese community...she mentioned that in New Zealand... Asians, we might do 10 things and achieve 10 things, but when it comes to communicating, we only highlight one achievement. I think that’s how we tend to operate. We do a lot but only mention one thing we’ve achieved. In

contrast, she observed that with Europeans...whether in a work setting, interacting with others, or managing up, can be quite different.

Participant G explained that individual achievements seemed less relevant when growing up in a collective culture, because “from a Chinese perspective, it's about contributing to something bigger,” and leaders should not present themselves as being the special one. With these Chinese cultural influences, leaders who have Chinese backgrounds often believe that personal achievements should not be prominently communicated. This stems from the belief that the culture they grew up in punishes those who stand out and disrupt harmony. This belief is not only observed from migrant Chinese leaders but also to New Zealand-born Chinese leaders, indicating that their upbringing has significantly shaped their quality of humility even without the general influence of national culture. However, their quiet leadership style is often perceived as being ineffective in predominantly Anglo-Saxon cultures. This pattern will be discussed further in later sections regarding the challenges they face.

4.2.5 I am Who I am

An unexpected theme emerged from the interview data when participants were asked the question, “Can you share an example of when Chinese culture may have influenced a leadership decision you made?” This question aimed to capture the distinctive decision-making processes, if any, among leaders of Chinese heritage and to understand how their cultural background influenced their thinking and behaviour in critical incidents. However, the responses were oddly similar, with participants stated that it was challenging to come up with a single example or incident that clearly demonstrated Chinese thinking. Instead, they often emphasised how they expressed their authentic selves in their day-to-day lives, which ultimately shaped their leadership styles. The term "authentic" frequently came up in interviews, with most participants asserting that being true to themselves was important, regardless of cultural influence.

Participant C emphasised the importance of authenticity by ensuring consistency between their “work persona” and their day-to-day life. They stated, “the way I am at work is exactly how I am outside of work,” expressing a desire to build an image that “people follow because they want to, not because they have to.” Participants G, J, K, and I all affirmed the cultural influences that shape who they are, have become inseparable aspects of their identities. Participant J

remarked, “I didn’t think I had any cultural traits influencing my leadership—until they just kept surfacing everywhere. I am who I am; I can’t change how my culture has shaped me.” Participant I stated, “I am Chinese—those Confucian values guide me regardless.” Similarly, Participant G noted that cultural aspects do not stand alone in decision-making: “rather than a single incident, it’s a constant influence. Leadership requires authenticity—I’m Chinese, I’m Singaporean, and that shapes my decisions daily.” Likewise, Participant K addressed that home culture has influenced who they became today: “Environment shapes your perspective. So, when you migrate to a new country, you don’t just leave those values behind.”

For Participants J and B, being authentic involves embracing vulnerability and recognising one’s limits. Participant J believes that sharing stories of failure with others fosters trust, which is essential in leadership roles. They said “I show them my vulnerabilities—sharing my own failures, telling them stories of how I once got things wrong. That builds trust.” Additionally, Participant B’s experience in the investment industry demonstrated that accepting one’s vulnerability can prevent failures that could result from one’s ego. For them, being vulnerable does not mean being weak, but being true to themselves and being true to how they present themselves to others.

Additionally, Participant G offered a particularly compelling perspective on situational leadership, stemming from their experiences living in both the Eastern and Western worlds. They emphasise the importance of self-exploration and adaptability, as well as maintaining self-identity and staying true to oneself. Having been born into a hierarchical society where status is enhanced and reflected in the corporate environment, Participant G found it necessary to adapt their leadership behaviour in a culturally different context upon arriving in New Zealand. They stated, “I think that situational leadership is quite key for me because I realised different people respond differently.” Participant G also expressed that the ability to interact with diverse individuals is a strength:

For instance, when working with different people, like Pākehā (New Zealand European) here, I would see eye to eye. But when working with Chinese community leaders, some of whom are 70 or 80 years old, I would naturally be more submissive and respectful. However, when reporting back or collecting insights, I would switch back to being professional. I see this as a strength—being able to adapt to different cultural scenarios with cultural intelligence.

Participant G sees this ability to adapt to different cultural scenarios as cultural intelligence which is a significant strength under globalisation and diversity trends in New Zealand, stated, “it’s about being globally adaptable—you don’t want a leadership style that only works for one country. If you lead in China, New Zealand, or elsewhere, you should still be effective.” However, they clarified that it should not be about reversing or withholding beliefs but rather adjusting them. Authenticity and adaptability complement each other and shape the personality of Chinese leaders in New Zealand.

Lastly, Participant D demonstrated that leadership influence does not fade after stepping down from a formal position of power. Who they are as a person continues to shape how they operate, not only during their time in the corporate world but also in their ongoing community involvement. Their authenticity continues to guide their actions and decisions:

I still go to a lot of community events now. And if I can share my influence, my connections, and the values of reciprocity with them, hopefully, they will carry those values forward to their children. Then we’ll have a great community.

Being true to oneself, regardless of status or context is what matters most to these interview participants. For them, cultural identity is inseparable from their sense of self and leadership approach. While they identify as Chinese, they also embody many other roles, this layered sense of identity helps explain their authentic way of being and leading.

4.3 Challenges and Outcomes

Participants who grew up in New Zealand and consider themselves as well “Kiwi-ised” reported that they had not experienced racial discrimination that hindered their career progression. In contrast, those with a migrant background who grew up outside of New Zealand—shared frustrations about the challenges associated with their Chinese identity, which emerged throughout the interviews. However, it is important to note that what one participant viewed as a challenge or frustration was not always perceived the same way by others.

The findings below reflect participants’ perspectives on the barriers they have personally faced or observed other Chinese individuals encountered in the corporate environment, as well as the

challenges organisations face in attracting and retaining Chinese talents. The impacts of these barriers—such as Chinese professionals choosing to leave New Zealand—are also discussed. Three key themes are explored, primarily in relation to two areas: the organisational environment and the broader macro environment, both within New Zealand and in a global context.

4.3.1 Experience with Identities

Almost all participants mentioned that non-Chinese populations hold certain assumptions about Chinese people in New Zealand. However, the impact of these assumptions was perceived differently based on each participant's personal attributes. Participants who grew up in New Zealand reported facing some level of prejudice, but they felt that the impact was minimal and did not significantly affect their career progression. For example, Participant B shared that they grew up during a time when there were few Chinese people around, making racial differences between Chinese individuals and New Zealand Europeans apparent. Nevertheless, they claimed they did not have a difficult childhood because of racism. Similarly, Participants A and C affirmed that they had positive upbringings and that their families were well-integrated into the community.

In the corporate world, Participant A expressed that they have not faced any barriers within the organisation where they have worked, due to the inclusive culture established within the existing work environment. However, they noted that in external settings, their leadership role was often not acknowledged during initial interactions—likely due to assumptions based on their appearance, which may relate to their race or age. Nonetheless, Participant A believed that “your actions and your ability speak for themselves [sic]” and noted that they disregard such negativity to focus on doing their best work. Participant E shared a similar attitude when discussing an incident that a customer demanded to be served by someone who looked like a native English speaker. Participant E explained that such racism is rare and stated, “I don't let it affect me. I'm very proud of what I have achieved, and I have confidence. While some might be affected, I decided not to let it impact me.” Despite this, Participant E also acknowledged, “There could be racism that you don't know about.”

The interview participants discussed both positive and negative biases associated with being Chinese. Participants F and H noted that Chinese individuals are sometimes offered roles

targeting Chinese or Asian communities, based on the assumption that they better understand the culture and are therefore more suited to such positions. However, they expressed a preference to be recognised for their skills rather than assumptions tied to their ethnicity. While these opportunities may appear positive, they felt uncomfortable being judged based on appearance. Participant H voiced this frustration: “They don’t realise the expectations and pressure that come with that. It’s really difficult and unfair for many Asian leaders.” They emphasised that being offered a role based on what they are, rather than what they bring, feels like a form of racial profiling—one that overlooks their individual value and capabilities.

By contrast, Participant J, Participant I and Participant K’s experience regards biases appears to be on the negative spectrum. As an immigrant, Participant J highlighted their observations of racism in New Zealand toward the Chinese community:

I didn’t fully realise it until I had lived in New Zealand for 30 years. There are so many stigmas attached to Chinese cultural heritage. We are often perceived as sneaky, as people who avoid taxes, and as those who make things up on the spot. If we operate restaurants, we’re assumed to be unhygienic. There’s also the stereotype that we might marry for the convenience of a visa. These assumptions exist regardless of whether or not they have any basis in reality.

Additionally, these unfair assumptions can be observed in corporate environment as Participant J’s experience highlighted the negative impact of biases, where they think they have to constantly prove their worth and invest significant time in building the trust and recognition that other leaders naturally have. They shared a worrying comment:

I sit on the same boards as other top men and women, yet I’m often excluded from the informal conversations that others have before meetings. They call each other to discuss the agenda, but they don’t call me. It’s as if they assume I’ll just go along with whatever is decided. Because of that background, I have to find ways every day to maintain my joy without relying on external validation...and that’s where the weight of cultural biases really lingers.

Likewise, Participant I pointed out their frustration based on their experiences: “There’s an assumption that you don’t have anything valuable to say; that you wouldn’t have as much to contribute as others who are not Chinese.” Participant K expressed a similar feeling from their career, “I’ve been undervalued more than once, despite being the top salesperson, the top

performer, and second highest in customer satisfaction. It didn't matter... Still, I was labelled as someone who needed to be 'managed'."

The experiences of Participant J, I, and K provide a clear illustration of the biases faced by Chinese individuals in the workplace. People do not necessarily dislike other cultural backgrounds, but truly respectful interactions are often lacking. These assumptions about Chinese people may seem daunting for those who aspire to enter leadership positions, as they are expected to act or perform in certain ways. Besides, there simply are not enough opportunities for them to progress in larger corporate environments. As a result, they tend to be more entrepreneurial leaders rather than corporate leaders within the Chinese community. Participant J explained,

I actually started my own firm because, even though I worked in a company and brought in a lot of clients, contributing significant value, they were not very responsive to my achievements by promoting me. They were quite happy to keep me as this really diligent bilingual receptionist for as long as they could.

These stories highlight a broader pattern where structural limitations and subtle forms of discrimination hinder the advancement of Chinese professionals in mainstream corporate environments. While individual resilience and entrepreneurial spirit are evident, these paths are often taken not by choice but by necessity, driven by a lack of recognition and limited career mobility. The participants' experiences reveal the need for more inclusive leadership development practices and a deeper awareness of how cultural assumptions can restrict potential. Without intentional efforts to challenge these biases and create equitable opportunities, valuable leadership talent within the Chinese community may continue to be overlooked or diverted away from the corporate sphere.

4.3.2 Difference Creates Misunderstanding

The previous discussion highlighted the challenges faced by Chinese migrant leaders due to a vastly different upbringing compared to most New Zealanders. They noted that "being assumed" to have certain quality created challenges at work. However, this issue was not as pronounced among some other participants, particularly those who grow up in New Zealand.

Notably, all participants shared that "being different" has led to misunderstandings and challenges in their career progression. Although New Zealand-born Chinese leaders may share similar upbringings with their European New Zealander peers, their perspectives and behaviours remain influenced by family values that can differ from the mainstream. Migrant Chinese leaders, however, were shaped more deeply by the cultural norms of their countries of origin, resulting in more noticeable differences in their leadership approaches and workplace experiences. These differences were commonly described in three areas: how they "look," "think," and "act." Each of these dimensions was explored in the interviews, with participants offering personal examples to illustrate the impact.

"Look Different"

The physical attributes of Chinese individuals make them look different from the general population since the majority of the population are Europeans in New Zealand. Despite some participants' families having immigrated to New Zealand two to three generations ago, they are still perceived as "non-local" due to being part of a minority group, and the history of Chinese people in New Zealand is rarely told. Traditionally, leaders in New Zealand have tended to be white males. This creates a public image that associates leadership with this demographic that leaders should be white. The attributes of successful leaders are often based on people's memories, and this mental image does not align with what a Chinese leader might look like. Participant B pointed out, "In my 30 to 40 years of experience, there has been a general perception of what a business leader should look like—someone with high confidence and a tough approach. However, the typical image of an Asian leader doesn't fit that mold." Participant K shared their job-seeking experience in New Zealand:

In the early days it was tough. When I first came here on a work permit, I worked in Rotorua in a business setting. But when I moved to Wellington and then Auckland, I couldn't even get job interviews. They told me I had "no New Zealand experience"—after I'd already lived in the country for six years...but looking back, I think that was just a cover. They weren't planning to hire anyone who didn't "look the part"—basically, if you weren't white or European.

As time passed, it became clear to Participant K that biases influenced hiring decisions. This frustrating reality highlights systemic issues in the job market, creating obstacles for skilled individuals from diverse backgrounds who seek equal opportunities in their chosen fields.

Participant K expresses that despite the skill or qualifications you may have, “some people just don’t care about your background or credentials.” This opinion was supported by Participant J, who explained why leaders with Chinese heritage are not often the first choice:

There aren’t a lot of examples out there where Chinese leaders are considered a suitable addition. People have a mental image of what someone leading that department in a New Zealand firm should look like. We just don’t have enough examples in New Zealand of leadership being held by Asians.”

Participant J described themselves as an “accidental leader,” explaining that their rise to a senior leadership position was not solely due to their leadership skills but rather because of the significant financial contributions they made result from their professional knowledge. Therefore, their leadership authority can sometimes be viewed as illegitimate by non-Chinese followers. Participant J said:

In the legal space, especially in a Commonwealth country, Asians are not expected to be at the top...so the fact that I became a leader was either a fresh surprise or an awkward reality for some people. They struggle to accept my authority, talent, and experience. It’s not automatic. We go through a bit of a dance to gain each other’s respect.

This fixed perception not only creates barriers for Chinese individuals aspiring to reach senior leadership roles but also makes it difficult for them to earn respect even after attaining such positions. Follow-up questions with Participant J explored whether these challenges were more closely tied to cultural background or gender, given that women might also face similar obstacles. Participant J responded, “I think being female is less of a challenge here because we’ve had many female leaders. It’s more about my migrant status, my Asian heritage, and the fact that I don’t have any strong backing.” Participant I echoed these experiences and described frequent feelings of exclusion and daily encounters with prejudice: “You don’t look the part, and as a result, people treat you differently. They don’t see you as one of them. You’re always an outsider.”

Another distinctive physical attribute is their language or accent. This presents a significant challenge, particularly for leaders with migrant backgrounds. Participant E and Participant H explicitly stated that language presents various challenges. Participant E explained that their generation was not raised in an environment where English was taught as a second language in school, leading to many of them lacking proficiency, especially when they first arrived in New

Zealand. Participant H noted that this creates difficulties for many Chinese immigrants when socialising with the public. Even some who arrived 15 years ago often only interact with about 5% of the total population of those who can speak Chinese. Participant E elaborated that business leaders are traditionally seen as effective public speakers, known for their eloquence. As for Chinese "that's a disadvantage," they said, "It is quite clear and there are lots of very bright people among the Chinese, but they can't be in top positions because they cannot articulate. It's very hard to go forward if you can't articulate in business, particularly." Participant K further claimed that it is not just the language proficiency; accent also creates barriers. "There's often a perception that if you don't speak with a certain accent or fluency, people switch off."

Language differences are a significant barrier, particularly for Chinese migrants. Participant H noted that many migrants lack the confidence to fully engage in social events due to language barriers and accents. This limited interaction contributes to hesitancy among Chinese individuals to pursue leadership roles. Many feel uncomfortable leading non-Chinese teams because of these language challenges and their limited exposure to New Zealand cultural norms.

On the other hand, Participant H also highlighted that even when language is not a barrier, the absence of a New Zealand upbringing can lead to social challenges that impact career progression. Migrant leaders may struggle to connect with colleagues on shared interests or cultural references. Even if they speak fluent English, the lack of shared memories or common experiences such as childhood TV shows or national sports like rugby can make it difficult for them to fully engage in socially meaningful conversations with those born and raised in New Zealand. In professional settings, where senior leadership appointments often depend not just on formal qualifications but also on informal networks and personal connections, migrant leaders are often at a disadvantage. Their limited involvement in social and networking spaces makes it harder for them to be seen as part of the inner circle, reducing their chances of being considered for top roles.

"Act Different"

Most participants mentioned that they spent extensive time with their immediate families and are strongly influenced by the "at home" values, despite some having grown up in New Zealand. Those values translate into behaviours that may seem "different" and are not always understood by some non-Chinese counterparts. Many participants noted that upholding the value of respect,

especially towards elders, or seniority and authority, can lead to challenges at work. Although other cultures might argue that respect is valued in society, the Chinese approach adds another layer that may not be understood unless one is from the same cultural environment. Participant F shared an example that highlights this cultural difference. A new intern they had hired from Hong Kong once gave up their seat to a Kiwi colleague during a meeting, even though the colleague had arrived late. In Chinese culture, offering a seat to someone is a sign of respect, particularly towards someone perceived as senior. After the meeting, Participant F pulled the intern aside and said, “If you want to progress here, don’t ever do that again.” As Participant F explained, “I understood that his actions came from a place of respect, as is common in Chinese culture, but in a Western corporate setting, it sent the wrong message.” This incident illustrates how acts of deference rooted in Chinese cultural norms can be misunderstood in New Zealand workplaces. When Chinese individuals express respect in culturally familiar ways, it may not be recognised or appreciated in the same manner by their Kiwi colleagues, leading to misinterpretation.

Moreover, the disparity in cultural norms regards respect can hinder growth for Chinese leaders. Participants H and G have both expressed that the fear to show disrespect can prevent Chinese individuals from expressing their ideas, as they worry about causing others to lose “face” if they show disagreement. This dynamic can result in operating rigidly as ideas are depressed, which hinders business growth. As Participant H explained, “This can lead to a lack of critical thinking or innovation. In Western contexts, challenging ideas and asking questions is often valued, but this can clash with the cultural tendency (of Chinese people) to not defer to authority.” As previously mentioned, Participant G practices situational leadership, meaning they lead differently depending on the context or the audience they interact with. Participant G stated, “If someone older than me is present, I would refrain from sharing my views. I would stay quiet out of respect, but sometimes that respect is interpreted as being passive or disregarded (in New Zealand).”

Over time, this can create the impression that Chinese individuals are quiet and do not express disagreement. This may explain Participant J’s experience about not being invited to conversations because others assume they will agree with anything proposed. However, this situation occurs when exclusion resides, often caused by others not understanding that in Chinese culture, people generally do not express disagreement unless being invited to do this. Furthermore, the misinterpretation not only does it creates challenges for those who are already

in the leadership position, the quietness often can be interpreted as incapability, which becomes a barrier to being selected for senior positions. This misinterpretation was invalid to Participant B, who stated, “Chinese people generally aren’t seen as extroverted, but that doesn’t mean they aren’t skilled.”

In addition to the challenges Chinese leaders face in expressing disagreement, deeply held values such as harmony and family can make it uncomfortable for them to confront conflict directly. Participant E shared this observation, noting that many other Asian leaders feel uncomfortable having difficult conversations, providing criticism, or giving negative feedback. They observed that, “The discomfort of being aggressive stops me from what I believe should be standard managerial behaviour. Managers shouldn’t feel uncomfortable doing such things.” Participant E also pointed out, “I find that white individuals (New Zealand European) often move forward because they are more assertive.” This assumption underlines the belief that Chinese individuals are not suitable for leadership positions, as assertiveness is traditionally seen as a leadership trait associated with successful leaders. Due to the concern for harmony and relationships, Chinese leaders often take a less aggressive approach. However, Participant G noted that acting firm or aggressive is crucial not only within internal teams but also when interacting externally. They have observed that many Chinese leaders fail to protect themselves or their teams from external pressures due to taking a softer or gentle approach. Reflecting on their own experience, Participant G shared, “In some settings, you need a stronger personal presence. If you don’t advocate for yourself, others may not either.”

This discomfort with assertiveness may be shaped by both cultural values and personal perception. For many Chinese individuals, especially those raised in environments where modesty and harmony are emphasised, being assertive can feel like overstepping. What they perceive as aggressive in a Chinese cultural context might be seen as appropriate or neutral in New Zealand. As Participant G recalled a piece of advice they once received: “If you think you're being aggressive, you're probably still not being assertive enough. What feels direct to you may only register as neutral to others.”

Lastly, leaders with Chinese heritage tend to act differently regarding working styles. Participant G pointed out that working styles are vastly different between their home countries and New Zealand. Asian countries tend to operate with a result-driven, top-down approach. Participant G stated, “In Asia, you’re not always given options—you’re just told what to do.” This can create frustration among leaders of Chinese heritage when interacting with their

employees, as it may seem disrespectful to them when disagreement was expressed by others. Even when they adapt to New Zealand's working styles, many struggle with reverse cultural shock when they return to lead in their home countries.

Moreover, the strong work ethic and emphasis on relationship-building instilled in Chinese leaders can sometimes be perceived as a threat by non-Chinese colleagues, particularly when these behaviours clash with local workplace norms. Participant K shared:

I've been told many times, 'You're over 45 and you work too hard—you make us look bad.' I used to talk to my staff at the door and have lunch with them. I'm a manager, but I still do that.

However, these actions, intended to foster connection and show leadership through presence, were not always well received. Participant K noted that some colleagues saw this behaviour as inappropriate. "No, you should behave more like a manager," was told to them at the workplace for better fitting. This issue raises the question of what is meaningful inclusion, should Chinese individuals work to overcome their own barriers in navigating the New Zealand corporate landscape, or should the environment itself become more inclusive by acknowledging and tolerating cultural differences? It is undeniable that these behaviour difference presents challenges for leaders of Chinese heritage. Participant H explained that within the current corporate landscape, Chinese values can hinder personal advancement due to conflicts of how Chinese individual behaviour verse what New Zealand embrace. Participant H mentioned, "Chinese culture can be helpful, but if you try to apply all aspects of it in Western society, it won't work. In fact, it can feel like a burden." This highlights the importance of adaptability; the interview participants have demonstrated a high level of adaptability, especially among those with a migrant background.

"Think Different"

About half of the interview participants believed that the lack of self-promotion can be a significant factor preventing Chinese individuals from advancing. As discussed earlier, the Chinese mentality that "gold will always shine" suggests that talent will be recognised eventually if one waits patiently. In a collective culture like Chinese, children are educated to blend in and not stand out. Those who present individuality may be seen as disrupting harmony and are sometimes punished.

Participants B and C argued that this humility approach does not equate to an inability to achieve; rather, it reflects cultural values. Participant C stated, “It’s funny because, in some ways, we can be quite direct, but when it comes to advocating for ourselves, we hold back. I don’t think it’s an issue of capability; it’s more about how we are conditioned to behave.” Participant B shared a similar comment: “They (Chinese people) tend not to self-promote but instead maintain a more humble and low-key approach. That doesn’t mean their thought process is low-key; it’s just different.” For those non-Chinese New Zealanders who think differently than Chinese individuals, this behaviour can be interpreted as a reluctance to seize opportunities, because they do not understand the cultural cue that Chinese individuals are simply being more considerate of others than themselves. Participant C further explained that this reserved mindset does not mean that leaders with Chinese heritage do not want to be recognised or rewarded, instead, they believe they should not need to push themselves to get what they truly deserve.

The last interview question was, “What do you think I should have asked, but I didn’t?” Participant C responded by saying, “You should ask me if I would be in a different place if I weren’t a Chinese or how have this experience changed me?” The question was then posed to Participant C, they responded:

I would be more explicit in asking for promotions and pay raises instead of just assuming that my hard work would be recognised. I can almost guarantee that I would have been paid more if I had been more vocal about my worth...so yes, I do think my career would have been different if I had approached things differently.

Interestingly, even though Participant C was not actively seeking senior leadership roles, they recognised the alternate life they would have preferred to live. Therefore, for those who were not lucky enough to be noticed, yet are still talented, are unlikely to ever be promoted or included. This sentiment was echoed by Participant H's observation that leaders who do not advocate for themselves face penalty. Unlike Participants B and C, who lived by the values of humility and were invited to opportunities, Participant H, with an immigrant background, explained that obtaining their position was due to self-advocacy. They realised the necessity of doing so in the New Zealand corporate landscape. They shared this observation:

In many cases, Asian professionals work hard, keep their heads down, and hope to be recognised when opportunities arise. However, Western societies often don’t operate

that way. This dynamic can penalise many capable Asian leaders who don't actively advocate for themselves. A lot of us wait to be seen, inspired, or given an opportunity. We expect someone to say, 'You're doing a great job; you should take on this role.' But it doesn't work that way, especially for senior roles.

This cultural difference was also observed by participant D, who was raised in New Zealand. "We're not taught to self-advocate; we keep our heads down, work hard, and hope someone notices us—maybe then we'll get promoted. But often, someone else gets the job!" said Participant D, "that's one thing I've always done—I've opened my mouth." they emphasised, "You might have all the tools, the degrees, everything, but unless you say it out loud, people won't know."

In addition to a general reluctance to engage in self-advocacy, Participant G reflected on how language differences further complicate this issue. They explained, "In New Zealand or European contexts, there's an inflation of language, adjectives lose their weight. But in Asia, if you achieve something, you achieve it. There's no puffing it up. It's an interesting cultural difference." For migrant leaders who speak Chinese as their first language, the more neutral and understated tone of Chinese communication—often lacking in exaggerative adjectives—means their achievements may come across as less impressive when described in English. Even when communicating success, their language choices may unintentionally downplay their accomplishments compared to native English speakers. Participant G acknowledged this difference and shared that they have encountered the "bamboo ceiling" as a result. They reflected, "If I had known earlier, I would have reported my successes more."

This raises a critical question: how do organisations truly identify and select talent? Participant B addressed the lack of structure and objectivity in leadership selection processes, stating:

I find it extremely challenging to get the right answers. Measuring success can be difficult. I'm fortunate that in the investment world, success can be attributed to trade records—like how much money you've made—but in other areas, it's not as clear-cut.

This insight is particularly important when considering Chinese leaders, who may not be skilled at self-promotion due to cultural norms that value humility. If these individuals are not actively advocating for themselves, how are they being noticed and selected for leadership roles? What signals are decision-makers relying on to assess their leadership potential? In some cases, organisations may select leaders with Chinese heritage not because of how well they

demonstrate leadership traits but because of the financial or professional value they bring. In other words, their selection may be driven more by measurable outputs, such as profit, performance records, or technical expertise, than by visible leadership behaviours. This raises questions about whether current leadership selection practices are truly inclusive. Furthermore, do New Zealand organisations understand what a good leader should look like?

4.3.3 Is New Zealand Ready?

So far, the challenges discussed have focused on individual and organisational levels, highlighting the unique attributes of Chinese leaders and how they interact with others in the corporate environment. However, leadership selection is also shaped by broader societal and structural influences. Several participants noted that the current leadership landscape does not reflect the demographic makeup of New Zealand, with leaders of Chinese heritage significantly underrepresented. The following section outlines barriers that exist specifically within the New Zealand context.

Not Enough Governmental Support

New Zealand's population remains predominantly European, but the growing diversity—especially the increasing number of Asian migrants—demands more inclusive approaches to leadership and representation. Participant E highlighted the challenge, “Asians are still struggling to attain the same recognition and acceptance (in New Zealand) that they would receive in China, Hong Kong, or Malaysia.” While inclusion efforts should benefit everyone, New Zealand's approach to diversity has largely focused on fulfilling its obligations as a bicultural nation. This has meant prioritising Māori and, to some extent, Pasifika communities. Participant B shared their observation: “The current focus is on gender equality and promoting Māori representation in business. I don't see much discussion around increasing Asian representation.” Participant H echoed this, pointed out a lack of targets for Asians in leadership, “We (our organisation) have targets for increasing the Māori population, but we don't have specific goals for Asian representation in senior leadership. The challenge with Asians is that we have the numbers, but not the seniority.” Participant C further emphasised the lack of resources and support, “Currently, there is a lack of both funding and resources for these groups (Chinese).” The situation seems to have worsened, diversity has become less prioritised due to economic recession. Participant C further addressed, “I think the momentum we had in New

Zealand regarding diversity might have slowed, particularly post-COVID...it will take time to reset things.” When minorities like the Chinese groups do not receive sufficient funding from either the government or organisations in supporting the equality initiatives, it becomes challenging for those who are eager to drive changes.

Given New Zealand’s strong commitment to biculturalism, most diversity efforts are directed toward honouring Indigenous rights and advancing Māori leadership. While this is essential, it has inadvertently left other minority groups—such as the Chinese community—without a clear pathway for recognition or progression. Participant G posed a key question, “how do we ensure a balanced approach that considers all dimensions of diversity, including age, disability, and economic disparities?” In the absence of policy frameworks or infrastructure that explicitly address the inclusion of Chinese or other Asian leaders, the responsibility falls to individual organisations. Without a wider understanding of the value of leadership diversity—including cultural diversity—there is little systemic motivation to increase the presence of Chinese leaders in senior roles.

Additionally, the implementation of affirmative action policies, while well-intentioned, may have unintentionally widened the divide between racial groups. Participant I addressed this issue, noting the negative perception such policies can create, “People might say, ‘You were only appointed because you fit into the criteria,’ rather than recognising your merit.” At the heart of the problem is a lack of sustained effort to promote genuine cultural integration. Representation alone is not enough—without initiatives that foster mutual understanding and trust, policies like affirmative action risk reinforcing, rather than bridging, social divides. Participant K highlighted the lack of genuine integration between communities in New Zealand, shared their personal observation:

When I first arrived, I attended every Chinese community event—Lantern Festival, Chinese New Year—and I noticed there were hardly any Europeans at those events. And when I went to European events, I was often the only Chinese person there. That’s not communication.

While language can be a barrier, Participant K argued that mindset plays a more critical role, “Sometimes the language barrier is an issue, but often it’s more about mindset—a willingness to break the cycle.” Participant K’s reflections point to a broader concern—the lack of government support in meaningful cultural communication. Without clear initiatives to foster

intercultural engagement, ethnic communities often remain isolated, leading to limited interaction and mutual understanding.

Does the Organisation Care or Really Understand the Importance?

“There is a lot of noise in this sphere, and everyone wants to be seen doing the right thing,” said Participant B. The affirmative actions and major fundings seem to target Māori and specific groups as a result of ethical obligations, but how much do organisations really understand the importance of DEI? Participant C expressed concern about the current situation:

Organisations talk about their diversity and inclusion initiatives, but how much of this is actually real within their own structures? Some companies excel at sponsoring diversity initiatives, such as cultural events, but are they genuinely making an impact and effecting change within their own organisations? That’s the crucial difference—do they truly understand the underlying values that drive behaviour?

Furthermore, Participant G expressed the view that DEI should not be a mere box-ticking exercise to fulfil ethical obligations:

The real change needs to come from within organisations themselves. The value of diversity and inclusion should be ingrained in all employees and decision-makers across government and corporate sectors...People need to genuinely believe in DEI, not just understand the theory behind it.

Participant K shared a similar opinion that in most organisations, DEI efforts are often just a way to improve a company's reputation without addressing the underlying issues of inequality:

Diversity is still defined primarily in terms of gender. Once they’ve ticked those boxes, anything else—like ethnicity—is seen as “extra.” That’s the problem with box-ticking. Diversity should be about identifying the best people for a role, based on the required skill sets, not based on race, gender, or ancestry...But when organisations say things like, ‘We need someone who looks different for our team photo,’ that’s just cosmetic diversity.

Likewise, Participant D shared the same observation in the public sector that “ethnic people are often seen as place-fillers.” To appear more inclusive and fulfil their DEI obligations, many organisations make efforts to increase minority representation in the workforce. However, due

to insufficient understanding of the importance of inclusion in major decision-making and a lack of support for minority career progression, there are still not many minorities in senior leadership positions.

Therefore, the misconception that DEI initiatives are a way to earn a gold star on an annual report overlooks a critical issue: there are not enough senior leaders with minority backgrounds. While the overall workforce within an organisation may reflect the demographics of the country, and many staff bonding cultural events may be held to create an inclusive work environment, the pathways for ethnic minorities to attain leadership positions remain limited. Organisations often fail to recognise the true importance of having ethnic minority leaders. Although having a sufficiently diverse workforce may look good on paper, it does not address the deeper issues at play. Over the past decade, Participant C had observed within their organisation that the senior leaders are predominantly white, however, these leaders are making decisions that impact staff members and customers who have a much more significant proportion of ethnic minorities. Those decisions often seem unrealistic despite good intentions. Participant C explained that some senior leaders spend most of their time with their own group and have little opportunity to interact with the broader population in the organisation, almost as if they are disconnected from reality. That's the irony.

Participant H supported the claim that many organisations in New Zealand are not ready to accept Asian leaders in senior positions, noting that there is little support for such diversity within the organisational structure. They stated, "I don't think the top leadership is prepared to embrace a very diverse culture." The preceding discussion suggested that a lack of self-advocacy may explain why leaders of Chinese heritage are often overlooked. Participant H said otherwise, "I've seen very capable Asian leaders shamelessly promote themselves and still not get opportunities. That's just how it is in New Zealand." They further addressed, "I haven't seen a single Asian leader who was given an opportunity without having to work their way up to make it happen. We worked incredibly hard and personally asked for these roles." Therefore, when differences are not embraced or even allowed at the senior level, how can individuals of Chinese heritage expect to reach the top?

For those who are already in senior positions, like Participant J, the frustration does not cease because they are considered unexpected leaders. They expressed, "If you're in an environment where you have to continuously spend time educating your team (about my seniority), you waste a lot of energy and mental capacity. Because you have so much more to do." In a way,

Participant J argued that this hampers their ability to contribute, “I was constantly spending time—half of the time—just to be validated, approved, or remembered. Again, and again, and again.”

Cultural Awareness Alone Falls Short

Even if there are policies in place to help Chinese communities or minorities, the emphasis is currently on cultural awareness, which does not address the underlying misunderstanding resulted from cultural difference. Many organisations believe that creating an inclusive environment can be achieved through activities like staff cultural events, such as karaoke nights, dumpling-making workshops, and celebrating minority cultural festivals. However, there are few, if any, educational workshops for employees that tackle these underlying differences in values and behaviours, which could potentially lead to conflicts at work. Miscommunication or misunderstandings can still occur, even if non-Chinese people know how to make dumplings, ironically. Combined with the government effort, organisations need to educate people about subtle cultural nuances that can lead to conflict, such as the “differences” discussed previously.

Participant C pointed out that despite good intentions and existing policies or incentives, the desired outcomes have not been achieved. “Minority groups, especially Chinese individuals, have not advanced into more senior leadership roles yet,” said Participant C. Although these are long-term progress efforts and results may not be visible immediately, Participant C suggested that these cultural events have raised awareness of Chinese staff among senior leadership. However, what implications does this have for promoting Chinese leaders? Does it make a difference? With that said, while these cultural events may help Chinese individuals feel more welcome in the workplace, they do not necessarily facilitate their advancement.

Loyalty Questioned during Geopolitical tensions

The macro environment influences organisational decision-making regarding the inclusion of Chinese individuals in senior leadership positions, especially those with a migrant background who still hold their home country passport. Participants B, H and K have all pointed out that geopolitical situations impact how organisations choose to promote leaders.

“When you work in a large organisation, there’s always politics involved,” said Participant B. Participant H shares a similar observation, “Geopolitical tensions between China and the US,

and by extension New Zealand, make it difficult for Chinese leaders to stay positive and factual. Many are the only ones in their roles, which adds pressure.”

Due to political divergence between China and most other capitalist countries, China continues to face judgment and blame from Western media. This media coverage has a significant influence on public geopolitical opinion, and many receive biased information. Consequently, organisations are concerned about selecting a senior leader with Chinese heritage, fearing it might negatively impact the company’s public perception and reputation, particularly when China is subject to numerous criticisms from Western countries. Participant K addressed the challenges faced by individuals of Chinese descent in career progression due to these influences:

There’s so much misinformation and disinformation. One time, someone asked me, ‘Are you Chinese?’ I said, ‘Yes.’ Then they followed with, ‘No, I mean... do you think like the Chinese government?’ I was like, ‘Seriously?’ I was interviewing for a role completely unrelated to that, and yet that was a question. With rising geopolitical tensions, it’s even harder. People question your loyalty. They look at you and wonder, ‘Are you one of them?’

This situation not only creates challenges in professional life but also fosters negative perceptions of certain racial groups that impact their daily lives. For example, there was a notable rise in racism directed at Chinese communities during COVID-19. Even though the New Zealand government clearly stated that blame should never be placed on any particular group, the impact of fear endures. This fear and the spread of rumours hinder individuals' ability to contribute, especially for those who hold overseas passports, raising questions about their loyalty to New Zealand.

The Chinese Have More Options Than We Think

As previously discussed, Chinese professionals face multiple challenges within the broader macro environment. These include limited acceptance of diversity, insufficient institutional support, a lack of promotional opportunities, and the impact of ongoing geopolitical tensions. Together, these factors create a work environment that can feel unwelcoming or limiting. As a result, many Chinese individuals choose not to remain in their organisations in the long term and instead seek alternative pathways to sustain their livelihood. This trend presents a growing challenge for organisations, which struggle to retain talented individuals from Chinese

backgrounds. Participant H addressed this problem, “Many talented Chinese professionals get frustrated with the lack of opportunities in large corporations and end up starting their own businesses. (Because) there’s little upward mobility.” Systemic barriers have discouraged many talented Chinese individuals from pursuing leadership roles in New Zealand. Participant H elaborated that witnessing the difficulties faced by current Chinese leaders often deters others from aspiring to similar positions:

I’ve talked to many who don’t want to be seen or go through what I’ve gone through to become a leader. I struggle to find people who want to follow in my footsteps. After observing and understanding what I do every day, most people say, ‘No, I don’t want your job. I don’t want to go through that.’

Additionally, Participant J explained the personality differences among Chinese individuals and noted that not everyone accepts living with these constant challenges in New Zealand. For some, it is easier to leave for better opportunities elsewhere. Participant J elaborated:

I’m a reasonably resilient person, naturally optimistic. But for some of my colleagues who don’t have as much spare energy as I do, having to motivate themselves every day under those mental constraints might just push them away. And they don’t stick around. That’s our (organisation’s) loss.

As a result, many highly capable Chinese professionals seek opportunities beyond what New Zealand can offer. With increasing global mobility, especially among well-educated and well-connected individuals, Chinese leaders often have more options. They may choose to relocate to countries that provide better career opportunities, higher salaries, or a more supportive environment for their children’s education. Participant H supported this point, noting, “Many capable and well-connected Asian leaders have the option to leave New Zealand for places like Australia, which some have done.”

It is essential to examine both sides of the issue. When the challenge exists at a national level, the question should not simply be, “Why don’t organisations want more Asian talent?” but rather, as Participant H noted, “They are just incredibly hard to find.” This reflects a broader brain drain problem: each year, New Zealand not only loses Kiwi talents but also capable migrants who see the country as a steppingstone before moving on to places with greater opportunities. “It’s a systemic problem that goes beyond individual organisations or sectors,” said Participant H. Countries like Australia and Singapore have visibly more Asian leaders in

senior roles, which makes career advancement feel more achievable for Chinese professionals. In contrast, in New Zealand, there is limited precedent. As Participant J explained:

In New Zealand, we don't have enough memories of being led by Chinese leaders. Because of this, the response to potential hires is often, 'you're not the right fit.' But the question is: 'What is the right fit?' It's based on our memories, which need to be updated—hopefully by looking at the experiences of other advanced countries.

In light of this, the conversation must involve both organisations and individuals. We must ask: How can we help organisations recognise the value of ethnic diversity at the senior leadership level, including the benefits of appointing leaders with a Chinese background? At the same time, how can we support Chinese professionals to overcome existing barriers and become more confident in pursuing leadership roles? Ultimately, this is not a challenge one group can solve alone. For meaningful progress, New Zealand as a nation must ask: What more can we do to genuinely embrace multiculturalism—not just in policy or celebration, but in leadership, opportunity, and inclusion?

4.4 Contributions and Opportunities for Greater Chinese Executive Leadership

All interview participants hold or have held leadership positions across a range of industries and professional fields, giving them firsthand insight into the challenges, contributions, and opportunities experienced by leaders with Chinese heritage in New Zealand, making their insights particularly valuable. This study adopts an appreciative inquiry approach, aiming to explore and clarify the contributions of leaders with Chinese heritage in New Zealand. However, encouraging participants to speak directly about their own contributions proved more challenging than anticipated. Many showed a strong sense of modesty and a reluctance to self-promote, which limited the extent to which personal achievements were discussed. This tendency was not fully accounted for during the design of the interview questions.

As a result, the findings primarily reflect participants' observations of the broader contributions made by Chinese leaders as a group, rather than in-depth accounts of their own individual impact. Nonetheless, some examples of personal contribution did emerge, particularly in the early parts of the interviews when participants shared their professional backgrounds and career journeys. These aspects were introduced earlier in Section 4.1, which focused on their

upbringing and career background. The discussion that follows explores both the participants' reflections on their own roles and their views on the wider impact of Chinese leadership in New Zealand. Their insights highlight four recurring themes: the importance of increasing representation in leadership; the broader benefits of diversity; the value of culturally distinctive leadership styles shaped by Chinese heritage; and the economic advantages of leaders who can bridge Eastern and Western perspectives.

4.4.1 You Cannot Be What You Don't See

Promoting Māori and Pacific leadership representation in New Zealand has been a primary focus in the DEI field in terms of racial equality. Participants C and J expressed that this action is understandable, as Indigenous people have traditionally faced political and economic disadvantages. However, this has increased dissatisfaction among other ethnic groups, especially New Zealand Europeans, who argue that it constitutes reverse racism. The discussion on the morality of affirmative action is beyond the scope of this study. Many participants, such as Participants G, E and J, have opined that quotas are not the answer for true inclusion, whether in corporate or communities. Participant E stated that the focus should not be on a specific group, but rather to address inequality for all disadvantaged groups, including Chinese individuals. Participant J observed that while current affirmative action policies supporting Māori wellbeing are essential, their very existence also highlights that our society has not yet achieved genuine, organic inclusivity. “When you rely on diversity and inclusion policies, it can feel like a forced correction—like an injection to fix something...The problem is, the more forceful or arbitrary these policies feel, the more people resist them,” said Participant J.

Although the interview participants do not support the implementation of affirmative action to increase the representation of Chinese leaders in New Zealand, they clearly recognise the importance of having more senior leaders with Chinese heritage. However, they believe this goal should not be achieved through enforced quotas within organisations, but rather through more organic and merit-based approaches. Participants, A, C, F, and H explicitly addressed the necessity of including more Chinese individuals into leadership positions due to the increasing Chinese population in New Zealand. Participant H noted the current low representation, “given the demographic shift toward a larger Asian population, it's disappointing to see how few are

in senior leadership roles, especially for Chinese leaders.” On the other hand, Participant F acknowledged the positive trend in New Zealand towards greater inclusivity, driven by the increasing diversity among future generations. Particularly children growing up in Auckland have more opportunities to be immersed in culturally diverse settings which fosters greater understanding between different groups. Considering that the many older generation lacked such experiences, there is hope that these valuable experiences will help break the barriers of misunderstanding and prejudice stemming from a lack of interaction between cultures. This was confirmed by Participant E, who explained that people are more accustomed to Asians in New Zealand compared to the 1970s or 1980s.

The growing Chinese population has called for greater representation in the senior leadership positions, not just as a future goal, but as an immediate priority. The current leaders with Chinese heritage can enable an aspiration for younger Chinese individuals, inspiring them to achieve their goals and bring influence on the wider community. “It creates belief, and it inspires people, and that's a key thing for it to happen,” said Participant A. Participant K shared a similar sentiment, “When young people see successful leaders from their own communities, it helps. It encourages them to aim higher and not hold themselves back.” The participants’ experience highlights the importance of representation. It not only empowered the Chinese community but also promoted broader inclusivity in New Zealand. Reflecting on their journey, participant K explained:

Things will only really change when we see more Chinese in senior roles. That’s not easy. It has to start at the bottom. In my council, there had never been a Chinese senior manager—until me. I was the first, though I didn’t go high enough. Still, that opened a path for others.

Participant K also stressed the role of the government in promoting inclusivity. They argued that meaningful change cannot be left entirely to individual organisations:

That’s not something organisations can fully do; it’s something the government should educate around. Government behaviour often sets the tone. If they don’t appoint ministers or board members of Chinese heritage, why would anyone else? People follow by example. Is it important to include more people of Chinese heritage in the government? Yes—because it shows that inclusiveness is being embraced.

The interview participants in this study were selected for their leadership positions. Their most lasting contribution may not be measured solely by their achievements, but by the hope they inspire in younger generations. By making success visible, they give Chinese children growing up in New Zealand the confidence to dream bigger—because, as the saying goes, “you can’t be what you don’t see.”

4.4.2 The Power of Diversity

The inclusion of Chinese leaders in senior positions not only provides vital role models for Chinese children but also enhances organisational decision-making by bringing diverse perspectives to the table. Growing up in a multicultural country, Participant G argued about the validity of DEI, “I see inclusiveness not just as an ideology but as a practical approach—diverse perspectives lead to more robust solutions. More diverse perspectives drive innovation. It’s both correlational and causal.”

As discussed previously, Participant C observed that due to lack of diversity in leadership, organisations tend to make decisions that are not well-suited to the broader workforce. This is because “they (majority of current leaders) don’t speak the same language, they don’t share the same values, and they aren’t doing the right things to include and understand these groups.” Participant J highlighted that the inclusion of cultural differences in leadership is crucial for organisational success:

Culture is what creates balance in human society—our differences allow us to contribute, complement one another, and challenge each other in meaningful ways. Without diverse perspectives, businesses operate within a narrow, untested framework. The greatest risk is assuming that one method of doing things is universally effective. If ideas or products are only tested within a limited scope, organisations may overlook key insights that could hinder their success. Including people from diverse cultural backgrounds provides a simple yet powerful way to ensure broader, more thoughtful decision-making, allowing concepts to resonate across cultures and markets.

Additionally, a lack of diversity in senior leadership positions can result in harmful decisions for organisations. Participant C highlighted a critical gap in senior leadership: a lack of cultural insight that limits their ability to make decisions that genuinely reflect the needs of a diverse

workforce or customer base. When leaders operate without a shared understanding of different cultural contexts, decisions that seem appropriate to one group may be misaligned, or even harmful, to another. This disconnect stems from assumptions made without a thorough understanding of the nuances of various demographics, particularly the Chinese community. To address this, Participant C explained that they often act as a gatekeeper in senior leadership teams, ensuring that decisions are not only realistic but also supportive of diversity. Their insight underscores the importance of including Chinese leaders in decision-making processes to improve the relevance and impact of organisational strategies. Participant C stated:

Personally, having progressed through the organisation over sixteen years, I have had the opportunity to work with a wide range of employees at various levels and have maintained contact with them. Many senior leaders haven't had that opportunity. It may sound basic, but having forums to enable conversations is useful; otherwise, you don't know what you don't know.

The need for leaders with cultural insight was further reinforced by two examples shared by participants. Participant G illustrated how cultural differences can influence outcomes and emphasised the importance of having diverse leaders to navigate these complexities effectively in the New Zealand context: "Take COVID-19 vaccination campaigns: for Europeans, the message was, 'Vaccination is good for you.' But for Asian communities, a more effective message was, 'If you care about your parents and grandparents, get vaccinated.'" Furthermore, from a legal perspective, Participant J highlighted concerns about New Zealand's recent migration policy, suggesting that it lacks sufficient research and cultural understanding. Despite the government's intention to attract more overseas investors, particularly from countries like China and India, the policy has proven ineffective. According to Participant J, this is largely due to policymakers' limited understanding of these regions and what motivates their investors. "I wonder if the government actually tested this policy before rolling it out. It feels a bit random," they remarked.

Participant C, G and J all observed that insufficient cultural understanding can have a negative impact on organisations or New Zealand as a whole. This highlights the need for increased inclusion of more ethnic leaders for the benefit of New Zealand's welfare. Especially with the growing population of the Chinese community, the inclusion of leaders with Chinese heritage seems necessary, not just a "nice to have" on the annual report. Participant J's experiences have demonstrated the power of diversity over time. When their own team merged with the current

organisation their working for, no one expected it to work due to concerns about cultural shock. However, due to the considerable financial gains their team has brought since the merger, the company has become more open-minded:

The firm has not only fully supported my team and our thousands of clients, but they've also continued to hire more people from our culture across different departments and teams. They recognise that it works and see the positive influence. I don't believe there's an explicit policy to recruit Chinese leaders; I don't think that's the intention. However, as they have observed how well we work together, they're no longer ignoring Chinese applicants or treating them as second choices. We regularly have new hires, and among them, there are always some Chinese faces.

Participant J emphasised that this change was not driven by ethical obligation; the organisation has experienced what they call “accidental success,” and this unintentional strategy is truly what makes an organisation thrive. “When things are going well, you don't have to force it—it just happens naturally. You build friendships, share contacts, and grow together... Because when diversity happens naturally, it becomes a real part of the organisation,” said Participant J.

4.4.3 Valued for Who They Are

The previous section explored the distinctive values and behaviours of the interview participants, as well as the challenges they face from “being different” within New Zealand's corporate environment. Despite these challenges, their cultural differences have also shaped their leadership in meaningful and positive ways. The values and behaviours they uphold which deeply rooted in their Chinese heritage have contributed significantly to their leadership styles and the impact they make. The following section highlights the positive outcomes of their leadership, demonstrating how their cultural background has influenced and enriched the way they lead.

Firstly, their values of collectivism and respect rooted in Chinese leaders can strengthen work relationships, resulting in a more harmonious and inclusive work environment. Participants A, C, G, J, and H have all explicitly stated that creating an inclusive environment is critical in a team setting. The interview participants demonstrated that trying to build relationships and

practising the value of reciprocity are both valued and impactful in leadership. Participant G argued that “the collaborative nature of Chinese culture—I think that brings a lot of benefits to New Zealand.” Recognising that great work cannot be done alone, leaders with Chinese heritage prioritise collaboration over competition. This can lead to better outcomes in organisations, as it allows individuals to contribute their best expertise and do what they are good at within a team. Participant A pointed out that the collective culture built at workplace is key to why their organisation stands out from its competitors: “I truly believe that the family orientation, the harmony, and the togetherness I bring (are important) ... I think that (this working) culture... has helped make the company a successful business in New Zealand.”

The inclusive and collective environment that those Chinese leaders create is appreciated by non-Chinese followers. This is because the desire for belonging, and the notion of togetherness is not solely a trait of Chinese culture; it is a common human desire shared by many. Participant J recognised the basic human needs for love and belonging, stated:

At the end of the day, human interactions aren't that different across cultures... Everyone wants to be respected, everyone wants to be recognised, everyone wants to be validated, everyone wants to be loved. I haven't found anything too different between Chinese and non-Chinese cultures in that sense.

Due to their cultural upbringing, which emphasises relationships and positive human exchanges, leaders with Chinese heritage can better fulfil the need for love, recognition, and belonging, as these values have become part of their life philosophy which guild their behaviour. Additionally, the emphasis on collaboration and relationship not only does it create inclusion in the workplace, but this also brings financial profitability to the business due to increased efficiency. Participant G addressed that Chinese people do not socialise merely for emotional benefits:

It's not just about socialising with no results, nor is it entirely task-based with no interpersonal connection. It's about balance. Balance is key. I wouldn't necessarily call it Confucian values—I'd say more Taoist values, like yin-yang. Balance is very applicable today, especially in a polarised world, whether in politics or organisations. The yin-yang way of thinking harmonises different perspectives while maintaining efficiency.

Secondly, the strong work ethic, high value placed on performance, and pragmatic nature of Chinese leaders contribute to increased productivity in organisations. Like Participant G noted:

(Chinese culture) focuses on meritocracy, pragmatism, and honesty, and you can see the outcomes. It's not ideology-driven, (but) it's outcome-driven. I think it helps not just economically but also socially and culturally—in service delivery, education, immigration, and health. It can have a huge impact... it contributes to efficiency and productivity.

The hardworking and performance-oriented nature of many Chinese professionals has driven high performance standards among individuals and organisations as a whole. As Participant A previously pointed out, the nature of hard work is not only a tribute to the elderly and what they have done for the younger generations but also about the idea of seeking a better future. This ideology is important in organisational culture, especially with intense competition in the global market. Participant A stated:

For a New Zealand company to succeed on a global scale... Yes, we've got to innovate and do some things that others aren't doing, but you've got to make it happen. Slug it out. Yes, there are lots of advantages to being based in New Zealand, but there are also many challenges. I believe the hard work ethic is essential to compete on the world stage.

Moreover, Participant C argued that including leaders with Chinese heritage in decision-making processes can enhance productivity, as their pragmatic nature often leads them to provide more direct and constructive feedback. This openness can introduce alternative perspectives that differ from those of traditional leaders, offering potentially more effective solutions. As Participant C noted, “there's always room for improvement in how things are done.” Drawing from their experience as a “gatekeeper” in a corporate environment, they emphasised the importance of advocating for ideas that are both practical and inclusive—particularly ones that better reflect the needs of minority groups. In contrast, leaders with limited cultural insight may overlook these nuances, potentially leading to less effective outcomes.

Thirdly, Chinese individuals and their cultural heritage can contribute meaningfully to New Zealand society because it offers a set of values and approaches that complement existing ones. As Participants G and J pointed out, the Chinese way of doing things, shaped by centuries of

practice and adaptability, brings a unique perspective that can enrich decision-making and community building. These contributions reflect the value of diversity itself—where the inclusion of varied cultural viewpoints helps create a more balanced and resilient society. Participant J said:

Chinese leadership brings wisdom. Chinese civilisation has been around for a long time. We've experienced human societies, internal conflicts, and changes over thousands of years. Even 'The Art of War'—a Chinese book on military strategy—has become a highly regarded textbook, not just for war, but for business, leadership, conflict resolution, management, and training. Why? Because it's based on real human experiences and interactions.

Similarly, Participant G stated: “I'd say the Chinese model is adaptable and fits into different cultural contexts. Chinese philosophy and values are the oldest and most time-tested. This wisdom is proven.” However, they are not arguing for the supremacy of one culture over another; instead, the participants contend that Chinese culture can bring substantial value to organisations due to its adaptability. This enduring cultural wisdom meets fundamental human needs, which are suited not only to Chinese people but also to a diverse society like New Zealand. Therefore, by staying true to their identity and practicing cultural values is a significant strength of leaders with Chinese heritage as they benefit New Zealand for who they truly are.

Lastly, leaders with Chinese heritage not only bring valuable cultural insight to decision-making, but they are also often better equipped to lead diverse teams. Participant G observed that leaders with Chinese backgrounds, tend to be more accustomed to multicultural environments:

It seems that Chinese or Malaysians are more accustomed to multiculturalism compared to people from other places. From my interactions, I noticed that they are more comfortable around individuals with different skin colours, especially compared to people in New Zealand... That adaptability is a strength.

This adaptability is not incidental—it often stems from their lived experience of navigating multiple cultural contexts. As Participant I stated, “Cultural capability tends to be high in migrants, because without it, you can't survive.” Therefore, Chinese leaders frequently have a deeper understanding of the challenges and dynamics involved in cross-cultural

communication and inclusion. As a result, they are often more empathetic, flexible, and effective when managing diverse teams. Participant K shared similar comment, said, “I believe multiculturalism could benefit from Chinese people playing a bigger role.” Due to their cultural proximity and sensitivity, these leaders are also better positioned to understand the needs and motivations of ethnic staff and customers. Participant K's experience as a leader of a diversity team has demonstrated the effectiveness of Chinese leaders in navigating multicultural teams:

When I led my department, I had people from 25 countries. A third were overseas born, another third was born in New Zealand but had overseas backgrounds, and the remaining 30% were Pākehā. The cultural differences were significant. It took me a whole year just to get the team to work well together. But after that, we were highly effective. We won two national awards and one regional award for the systems and tools we developed.

The cultural competence demonstrated by Chinese leaders enables organisations to make more inclusive decisions, which can enhance employee engagement, reduce turnover, and improve customer satisfaction. Ultimately, both the cultural perspectives and professional contributions of Chinese leaders have the potential to enrich New Zealand society—not just because they are different, but because they bring valuable insights, experiences, and strengths worth recognising.

4.4.4 Cultural Insight Needed for Growth

Globalisation has led to the demand of leaders who understand cultural nuances for business success. Participant B emphasised this point: “As New Zealand becomes more trade-focused and does more business with Asia, having institutional knowledge is crucial.” Organisations that understand cultural nuances, embrace diversity, and manage diverse talents wisely tend to be more successful than others. Participant B further provided an example of the Sanlu milk scandal in 2008, stated:

In the case of Fonterra, they promoted senior managers offshore, including in China, but these managers didn't fully understand the business practices and weren't closely connected to the core business. Leaders would attend meetings without actively participating or contributing, and this led to losses of billions of dollars for Fonterra.

Participant B argued that one reason for business failures in international markets stems from a lack of understanding of how to operate overseas. In this context, having someone at the decision-making who possesses cultural and contextual insight can make the difference between success and failure. Participant D recalled that years ago, a company approached them for advice on attracting more Asian investors:

I received a call from a big real estate firm—this was maybe 30 years ago. They said, 'There are a lot of Asians coming in, and they've got a lot of money.' They asked, 'How do we reach these new customers?' I replied, 'You just need to employ some Asians.' And now you can see it across the board—banks, insurance companies, real estate agencies, accountants, lawyers—they (the Asians) know where the customers are. So, they've had to employ Asian people to get their business. Because otherwise a lot of the newer arrivals don't speak English.

This example demonstrates that including Chinese professionals ensures that important decisions are informed by relevant cultural knowledge and lived experience. Building on this point, Participant C emphasised that in today's interconnected world, it is increasingly important for Western professionals and organisations to understand Eastern cultures—not only to avoid missteps, but to foster more effective, respectful, and mutually beneficial relationships:

I think Easterners have lived here (in New Zealand) for generations and have a better understanding of Westerners, whereas Westerners have not fully grasped the perspectives of Easterners. Given where the current economy is heading, you need both viewpoints, and I think the West is a little behind in understanding other cultures.

For this reason, leaders with Chinese heritage are crucial in helping New Zealand organisations grasp global dynamics, especially considering China is New Zealand's largest trading partner. They act as mediators, connecting both perspectives for better collaboration. As Participant H described from their experience:

I got my job because of my capability and my connections to the Asian community, but my Asian clients and professionals come to me because of my outreach and connections in mainstream business... It's not just about translating; we're connecting cross-border opportunities.

Participant H's experience highlighted the valuable contributions that Chinese leaders bring to work, especially in larger New Zealand organisations. Chinese leaders not only provided their expertise but also offered cultural insights that enhance relationships between people, organisations, and countries. Lastly, in light of the current situation where there is a shortage of leaders with Chinese heritage or ethnic backgrounds, Participant J emphasises the need for New Zealand organisations to learn from a global perspective rather than remaining isolated. They state:

I think organisations really need to upskill themselves by looking at how other organisations are doing it globally. Who's leading the top banks in Australia? Who's leading the top funds or law firms in Malaysia, Singapore, or even London? And even in Tokyo or Hong Kong? We have to consider how others are doing it. When we only look within our own environment, it's harder to break out of established norms.

To challenge the assumption that Chinese leaders are not often seen as desirable, organisations must learn from globally successful companies and adopt a more open-minded approach in their executive selection processes to combat biases. Therefore, start to consider what leadership outcomes are desired in the organisation and how to select the true talent. The need for inclusion is not simply a moral or cultural concern — it is an economic imperative. For New Zealand to remain competitive on the global stage, it must harness the full talent pool, including the knowledge, insight, and leadership of Chinese New Zealanders. If we fail to recognise and include this talent now, what opportunities will we miss tomorrow?

4.4.5 Opportunity Ahead for Greater Inclusion

Given the clear underrepresentation of leaders with Chinese heritage in senior positions across New Zealand's corporate sector—and in light of the challenges discussed earlier—the following section explores the actions organisations can take to attract more leaders with Chinese heritage and foster greater inclusion. These insights are drawn directly from the lived experiences of the interview participants. As previously discussed, the key challenge for Chinese professionals advancing in corporate careers is not the absence of affirmative action, but rather a lack of systemic support and flaws in recruitment and promotion processes. The following offering suggestions focused particularly on how organisations can better recruit, support, and retain leaders of Chinese heritage.

Firstly, a number of participants noted organisations should provide cultural awareness training in mitigating the impact of unconscious bias, especially in recruitment. The differences are apparent between individuals of Chinese heritage and New Zealand majorities as previously discussed, being aware of the impact of bias seems to be the first step in introducing more Chinese professionals into the pipeline. Participant G opined:

Ensuring that recruiters and hiring managers are aware of unconscious bias is crucial. This isn't about affirmative action but recognizing talent based on merit. If a Kiwi (non-Chinese) candidate and a Chinese heritage candidate have the same qualifications, recruiters should be mindful of any biases that might influence their decision.

Once organisations can recognise and appreciate the value that Chinese individuals can bring, DEI will become a true part of their operations, yielding tangible benefits for both employees and organisations.

Secondly, once Chinese professionals enter the workforce, they need targeted support to progress in their careers and make a greater impact. A significant challenge lies in cultural expectations that many Chinese individuals are raised with values that discourage self-promotion, which can conflict with Western workplace norms that reward visibility and assertiveness. As a result, organisations may wrongly interpret this cultural difference as a lack of ambition or leadership potential. This misperception often leads to lower promotion rates, as leadership roles are commonly given to those with louder voices—criteria that can unintentionally disadvantage talented Chinese professionals. Over time, the lack of recognition and advancement opportunities can lead to frustration, prompting capable individuals to leave in search of better prospects elsewhere. To retain Chinese talent and strengthen internal leadership pipelines, organisations must create systems that actively support their growth. This includes educating managers about cultural differences, offering professional development opportunities, and helping ethnic minority staff build confidence in areas such as communication and leadership presence. However, the current initiatives lack in providing meaningful support to Chinese professionals in career advancement, as Participant C noted, “At the moment, the focus is just on fostering pride in one’s cultural identity,” which is a valuable start, but not enough to achieve genuine inclusion. Practical strategies—such as workshops on public speaking, mentoring programmes, and leadership development initiatives—are essential. These efforts require adequate resourcing and a serious commitment

from organisations. “The company needs to actually invest in this work and take it seriously if they want real change,” said Participant C.

Lastly, to encourage more Chinese leaders in New Zealand, visibility and representation are also crucial. As Participant I explained, “Visibility is important. Networking is important too—so people get to know you.” Participant I highlighted the important role of New Zealand Asian Leaders (a non-profit organisation aiming to accelerate and celebrate Asian leaders) to increase the visibility of Asian talent and the importance of those in leadership roles supporting others, “Once Asians get into positions of authority, it’s important that they promote others. Otherwise, you’ll find that Asians remain in the bottom half—not in leadership roles or top positions.” Similarly, Participant G emphasised the importance of promoting Chinese leaders into tier-one, tier-two, and tier-three roles to signal a clear and attainable path forward for future Chinese leaders.

Together, these perspectives underscore the need for organisations to go beyond symbolic inclusion and implement meaningful initiatives that support the long-term development and visibility of Chinese professionals. Organisations that genuinely commit to inclusion must ask hard questions about how they identify and nurture leadership potential. They must be willing to shift from passive celebration of diversity to proactive cultivation of it. As several participants have made clear, change will not come from one-off programmes or good intentions alone—it requires structural change, sustained investment, and a willingness to see leadership through a broader, more inclusive lens.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented four key themes drawn from the interviews: the upbringing and career background of the participants; how their values and behaviours influenced their leadership styles; the challenges faced by leaders with Chinese heritage in New Zealand; and the contributions they made alongside opportunities for greater inclusion of Chinese leaders in organisations.

The study drew on insights from 11 leaders across various industries in New Zealand’s public and corporate sectors. Four participants were born in New Zealand, while the remaining seven migrated from places including Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, and mainland China. Their

diverse experiences highlighted both shared cultural values and the ways upbringing shaped leadership perspectives.

Participants consistently emphasised values such as hard work, respect, humility, and education—principles often rooted in their cultural or family upbringing. These values translated into leadership styles that were pragmatic, performance-oriented, and relationship-focused. Many preferred to lead by example rather than through hierarchy, prioritising team cohesion and collective wellbeing. While some acknowledged that assertiveness and visibility were important in New Zealand workplaces, these traits often conflicted with their preference for modesty and collaborative achievement. Despite these tensions, participants consistently expressed a desire to lead authentically drawing strength from their cultural background and personal values.

The chapter also explored challenges faced by Chinese leaders. New Zealand-born participants generally did not experience overt racism in their early lives but were still aware of underlying biases, particularly in career advancement. These barriers were more apparent for migrant leaders, many of whom felt excluded due to cultural misunderstandings or not fitting the ‘ideal’ leadership image. Traits like humility, indirect communication, or having an accent were sometimes misinterpreted as a lack of confidence or competence. Such misunderstandings contributed to Chinese professionals being overlooked for leadership opportunities, regardless of their capability. Beyond individual experiences, these findings point to a broader systemic issue: many New Zealand organisations remain underprepared to embrace leadership diversity. Participants suggested that the issue lies not only with individuals to adapt but also with institutions to better recognise, support, and value different forms of leadership.

Most importantly, I also described the unique contributions Chinese leaders bring to teams and workplaces. As visible role models, they inspired younger generations of Chinese New Zealanders to believe in their potential. Their leadership styles—grounded in empathy and humility—enhanced workplace well-being, improved team dynamics, and supported long-term organisational goals. Culturally, their insights offered strategic advantages for organisations working with Chinese-speaking markets or the Chinese workforce. Their understanding of cross-cultural business practices, combined with their ability to bridge worldviews, positioned them as valuable contributors to New Zealand’s growing global engagement. In this sense, cultural difference was not a barrier but a resource—benefiting both organisations and the wider community.

In conclusion, this chapter highlighted the nuanced and often underappreciated leadership contributions of Chinese New Zealanders. It also underscored the cost of exclusion—not only to individuals, but to organisations and the nation as a whole. When capable leaders are sidelined due to bias or narrow views of leadership, New Zealand misses out on talent that already exists within its borders. True inclusion, then, is not just an equity issue but a strategic one. Expanding leadership representation strengthens the social and economic fabric of Aotearoa. When people from all backgrounds can lead authentically and be recognised for their strengths, the whole nation benefits. The next chapter will reflect on these findings in relation to academic literature and discuss their broader implications for leadership and diversity in New Zealand.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

The previous chapter presented findings from interviews with 11 leaders of Chinese heritage currently or previously holding leadership roles in New Zealand. These findings highlighted a critical issue: the lack of diversity in leadership and the systemic biases that continue to limit the full utilisation of available talent in New Zealand. As discussed in the literature review, the increasing ethnic diversity of New Zealand's population has placed growing pressure on institutions to address the under-representation of minority groups in decision-making roles. The interview data suggest that leaders with Chinese heritage may offer valuable contributions, particularly through their cultural insights and cross-cultural competence.

This chapter discusses how the two primary research questions were addressed in relation to my interpretation and current literature. It also explores the academic and practical implications for organisational leadership and governance in New Zealand. Following this, the chapter outlines the study's limitations and proposes directions for future research. It concludes with a personal reflection on the research process and the development of this thesis.

5.1 Insights into Research Findings

The research was guided by two key questions aimed at understanding the lived experiences of leaders with Chinese heritage in New Zealand. These questions stemmed from both personal curiosity and a desire to contribute meaningfully to the Chinese community and New Zealand society, particularly in addressing the under-representation of Chinese in leadership. This section below draws on both the interview data and the existing literature to interpret the findings and highlight what New Zealand may be missing when such potential remains overlooked.

5.1.1 How Does Chinese Heritage Influence New Zealand Executives' Leadership Thinking and Practice?

This research question aimed to explore the extent to which Chinese culture influences individuals' behaviour and how these cultural values are reflected in their leadership practices at work. The intention was to better understand how much of their professional contribution

can be attributed to cultural factors. I initially anticipated that Chinese values would play a significant role in leadership decision-making among the participants—something I can personally relate to, as certain aspects of Chinese values influence how I engage at work. The findings did confirm that all participants recognised how their personal values aligned with traditional Chinese cultural values, much like my own experience. However, what stood out was the wide variation in how each Chinese leader led, shaped by their unique life experiences and individual contexts. Through analysing the participants' values and leadership styles, I have identified three key observations in response to the first research question. These are discussed in detail below.

National Values Guides General Behaviour

The literature review examined the nine cultural dimensions of the GLOBE Project, particularly relating to Confucian Chinese culture. When compared with the findings from the interview data, it became evident that all participants demonstrated an alignment between traditional Chinese cultural values and their personal values, which in turn shaped their workplace behaviour and leadership practices.

The findings highlighted four main themes through which participants' values influenced their leadership styles—all of which correspond with the GLOBE Project's insights. Firstly, participants' strong emphasis on education, hard work, and setting high expectations for performance aligned with the GLOBE dimension of high-performance orientation. Participants believed that high performers should be recognised and supported, especially in today's competitive environment. Secondly, their efforts to foster a sense of belonging in the workplace and build strong interpersonal relationships, along with an evident avoidance of conflict, reflected the cultural value of in-group collectivism. This cultural trait encourages individuals to identify closely with small, cohesive groups such as families or work teams. It also explains the humility participants showed a tendency to prioritise group achievement over personal ambition. Thirdly, many participants, particularly those with a migrant background, demonstrated deep respect for elders and authority figures, consistent with the GLOBE finding of high-power distance in Chinese culture. This suggests a cultural acceptance of hierarchical structures and an expectation of deference to leadership. Lastly, participants frequently practised empathetic leadership, showing genuine concern for their followers' well-being and development. This aligns with the GLOBE dimension of high humane orientation, where kindness, compassion, and responsibility toward others are highly valued.

While the GLOBE framework is helpful in identifying broad Chinese values such as performance orientation, collectivism, power distance, and humane orientation, it falls short in capturing certain culturally embedded values specific to Chinese society. One example is the notion of “face.” Although the desire to maintain harmony may align with GLOBE’s collectivism dimension, the concept of face involves a more intricate system of relational etiquette, social reputation, and indirect communication, none of which are fully addressed by the framework (Hwang, 1987; Gao, 1995). Another example is the influence of the traditional Confucian class hierarchy, particularly the role of the “shi.” Historically, the “shi” were scholar-officials and moral exemplars, valued not for wealth or status but for their education and virtue (Worm, 2010). This ideal continues to shape leadership behaviours among Chinese individuals, especially in their emphasis on learning and modesty. These values were frequently expressed by participants, yet they do not map easily onto GLOBE’s dimensions, which are rooted in a Western conceptualisation of leadership and social structures.

While the GLOBE framework has limitations, particularly in its tendency to universalise cultural dimensions through predominantly Western epistemological assumptions, it remains a valuable tool for understanding Chinese individuals' values and behaviours in Western contexts (Smith, 2006). This is evident in the present study, where participants’ leadership styles reflected enduring elements of Chinese cultural heritage, even among those raised in New Zealand. By applying the GLOBE framework critically and contextually, we can better appreciate the complexity of Chinese leadership practices and how they adapt within multicultural environments.

Upbringing Shapes Personality

Although all participants inherited traditional cultural values as part of their cultural heritage, individual differences in their leadership styles were evident. These differences largely stemmed from variations in upbringing and work experience.

The distinction between cultural influence and upbringing in shaping personality is sometimes blurred—especially for New Zealand-born participants. Even those whose families had lived in New Zealand for two or three generations were still frequently perceived as outsiders (Chan & Spoonley, 2017). This perception stems in part from the limited representation of Chinese stories in New Zealand’s historical narrative, as well as the broader tendency to view Chinese individuals as “non-locals.” As children of migrants navigating life in New Zealand society,

many New Zealand-born Chinese participants grew up observing the strong work ethic of their parents and grandparents. This early exposure instilled in them a determination to succeed in an unfamiliar environment. However, it remains unclear whether this drive is rooted in traditional Chinese cultural values or shaped more broadly by a migrant mindset. As Participant A reflected, “I’m not sure if that’s the Chinese value or just a survivor instinct as a migrant.”

Furthermore, the contrast between participants’ experiences of bias, acceptance, or discrimination revealed that those with a migrant background and those raised in New Zealand perceived their social environments quite differently. New Zealand-born Chinese participants acknowledged the presence of unfairness toward the Chinese community but rarely shared personal experiences of exclusion or discrimination that had significantly impacted their careers. In contrast, participants with recent migrant experiences shared more frequent and vivid stories of exclusion and unfair treatment, which had left lasting negative impacts. They often expressed deeper insights into the challenges faced by Chinese professionals. This phenomenon suggests that upbringing and lived experience have a stronger influence on how individuals perceive and describe the world around them. As such, despite sharing a common cultural background, second- or third-generation Chinese New Zealanders who are descendants of earlier migrants and have adapted to New Zealand society may not fully identify with the workplace exclusion experiences faced by more recent, first-generation migrants.

Gender also emerged as a relevant factor in shaping participants’ experiences and worldviews. Although gender was not a primary focus of this study, the intersectionality between gender and cultural background was significant. Female participants often encountered more frustration in corporate environments in New Zealand, where leadership is traditionally associated with assertiveness, traits not typically encouraged among women in traditional Chinese culture. As the literature review noted, Chinese women have historically been viewed as subordinate to men and are not expected to exhibit traits often seen as essential for leadership in New Zealand contexts.

The challenges for Chinese women in attaining leadership positions in New Zealand operate on multiple intersecting levels, both gender and cultural. These women are confronted not only by the “bamboo ceiling” that limits many women’s advancement but also by the “glass ceiling,” a term used to describe the systemic and cultural barriers faced by female (Lewellyn & Muller-Kahle, 2020). “Basically, on top of sexism, women of colour have to battle additional

discrimination based on their race, ethnicity, and culture. ‘Gendered racism’ creates for them thicker barriers that white women may escape (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010, p. 173).

Such experiences of female participants reflect what Tang (2019) describes as a debilitating form of self-fulfilling prophecy that can erode minority women's confidence and willingness to pursue leadership opportunities. These psychological effects, combined with reduced access to influential networks and mentoring—both of which are critical for leadership development—further hinder the progression of Chinese women leaders. The intersection of gender and cultural barriers thus creates a uniquely challenging environment for Chinese women seeking leadership roles in New Zealand.

A Chinese Leader or Just a Leader?

The previous sections highlighted that while all participants shared values commonly associated with Chinese culture, their individual life experiences significantly shaped their perspectives and leadership styles. This diversity challenges the assumption that there is a singular, uniform model of “Chinese leadership.” The very term “Chinese leader” is a social construct that implies certain traits or behaviours based on cultural identity. Yet, the data revealed that participants led in a variety of ways, shaped not only by culture but also by personal upbringing, gender, and experience. When such diversity exists within a single group, is it fair or accurate to categorise them based solely on cultural background?

This tension is similar to the experience of female leaders. The tension faced by women in leadership is often magnified by the way their identities are framed, particularly when gender becomes the focal point of how their leadership is perceived. This challenge persists despite increasing representation. A notable example occurred during a joint press conference in 2022 when New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was asked whether her meeting with Finland’s Prime Minister Sanna Marin was due to their similar age and gender (Cheung, 2022). Ardern firmly rejected the premise, stated, “I wonder whether or not anyone ever asked Barack Obama and John Key if they met because they were of similar age... Because two women meet, it’s not simply because of their gender.” This response reflects a broader frustration many female leaders experience that is being seen not just as leaders in their own right, but through a limiting gendered lens. As Marin added, “We are meeting because we are prime ministers.” Together, their comments highlight the persistent issue of gender overshadowing role-based recognition in leadership discourse.

The same question arises here: should leaders with Chinese heritage in New Zealand be viewed through the lens of their cultural identity or simply as leaders contributing value to society? On the one hand, leadership is inseparable from culture that values, behaviours, and leadership styles are often deeply shaped by cultural upbringing. As the participants noted, their Chinese identity is integral to who they are. Their leadership is authentic because it reflects their true selves. On the other hand, participants also demonstrated individual differences and a range of leadership approaches, showing that cultural identity does not determine leadership style in a fixed way.

Neither perspective is entirely right or wrong. Rather, it raises broader questions about how we select and assess leaders. Should leaders be chosen because they resemble past successful leaders? If so, does this not replicate the very bias that has excluded diverse voices? The ideal is to select leaders based on merit and performance. But even that leads to further questions: Who defines merit? How is performance measured? And whose standards are we using? These are not questions limited to leaders of Chinese heritage; they are also relevant to how we evaluate all leaders. Until we critically reflect on the assumptions behind our leadership models, we risk missing out on the value that diversity can bring.

In conclusion, in addressing the first research question, this study found that traditional Chinese cultural values provided an important foundation for participants' leadership thinking and behaviours, particularly in shaping their work ethic and core beliefs. However, these values were not the sole influence. Participants' leadership styles were also shaped by their personal histories, including their upbringing, migration experiences, and interactions within New Zealand society. Rather than revealing a singular model of "Chinese leadership" or a fixed identity of "Chinese leaders," the interviews highlighted a range of leadership expressions that reflected both cultural heritage and individual life journeys. This diversity challenges any assumption that leadership potential can be determined by cultural identity alone. Instead, it points to the importance of recognising how culture and personal experience interact to shape leadership in complex and context-specific ways and offering valuable insights for leadership development and talent recognition in New Zealand.

5.1.2 What Are the Opportunities and Constraints for Advancing Executive Leadership in New Zealand With Chinese Heritage?

This question aimed to explore the lived experiences of leaders with Chinese heritage in New Zealand, specifically the challenges they face and the opportunities that could support Chinese professionals into senior leadership roles. While the literature review discussed the concept of the bamboo ceiling and the factors that hinder Asian leaders from reaching senior positions, there is still limited research focused specifically on the New Zealand context. However, the challenges identified in this study mirror those found in other Western societies such as the United States and Australia.

Although some of these challenges were expected prior to conducting the interviews, this research was particularly interested in understanding why Chinese leaders should be included in senior leadership and how their presence adds value to New Zealand organisations. These questions were partially addressed in 4.4, which highlighted the contributions of Chinese leaders. However, the interviews offered limited insight into how more Chinese leaders could be supported or what specific initiatives should be introduced to increase their representation. During the interviews, it appeared that many participants had not previously considered these broader systemic questions, as their focus was primarily on their own career development rather than institutional change.

Nevertheless, the challenges shared by participants point to deeper issues that warrant reflection and action at both organisational and national levels. The discussion below reveals that New Zealand's leadership landscape remains shaped by Western-centric norms, with limited acceptance of alternative cultural values. However, growing diversity trends have prompted a call for meaningful action to address systemic exclusion, so that New Zealand can fully benefit from the talent and perspectives within its increasingly multicultural society.

Leadership in an Anglo-Saxon Dominated Framework

The challenges faced by leaders with Chinese heritage highlight a deeper phenomenon: New Zealand society continues to operate within a dominant Anglo-Saxon cultural framework that shapes expectations of leadership. This is not necessarily intentional, but rather the result of long-standing norms inherited from colonial history and reinforced through mainstream organisational practices.

This issue reflects a long-standing tension within academic research, where dominant theories and frameworks have been shaped by colonial logics (Ladkin, 2025). Scholars such as Foucault (1996) and Kuhn (1962) have highlighted how those in positions of power, often colonisers, determine what knowledge is legitimised and perpetuated, thereby shaping the direction of entire academic fields. In leadership research, dominant paradigms such as trait theory and the “great man” theory emerged within this colonial context. For centuries, scholars debated whether leaders were born or made, focusing largely on identifying fixed traits associated with effective leadership (Taylor, 2022). This approach, however, carries significant limitations. It overlooks the relational dynamics between leaders and followers, and by focusing solely on traits, it implicitly excludes individuals who do not fit the idealised profile.

Historically, the early subjects of leadership studies were white, male, and situated within Western cultural frameworks. As a result, leadership styles that emerge from different cultural backgrounds such as those rooted in Chinese values and practices have often been marginalised or misunderstood. As several participants in this study observed, the dominant image of a “successful leader” in New Zealand remains one that is assertive, male, and of European descent.

The colonial logic embedded in academic research is also reflected in New Zealand organisations and society more broadly, where the low representation of Chinese individuals in leadership positions speaks to the enduring impact of colonial frameworks and Anglo-Saxon leadership ideals. Both the findings and the literature highlight that leaders with Chinese heritage are often perceived as not meeting the “standard” expected during leadership selection processes. Consequently, they may be undervalued unless they adapt to these prevailing expectations. Instead of recognising the distinct strengths and perspectives these leaders bring, the focus is frequently on how they should change or adapt in order to “fit in.”

Additionally, as the findings revealed, many Chinese leaders tend to lead with humility and avoid self-promotion—traits shaped by their cultural upbringing, which emphasises collective wellbeing over individual recognition. Yet, current talent identification frameworks rarely recognise or reward these qualities. The current leadership recruitment in New Zealand, particularly for executive roles, often favours those who can confidently articulate their personal achievements and stand out in a highly visible way. As confirmed by further research (Fernández-Mateo & Fernández, 2015; Aequalis Consulting, 2024), executive roles are often filled through headhunting processes that rely on visibility, strong personal networks, and

assertive self-presentation—skills many Chinese leaders have not been socialised to develop. Their humility, far from being recognised as a leadership strength, becomes a barrier in systems that privilege Anglo-Saxon ideals of assertiveness and individualism.

Consequently, leaders who cannot or choose not to conform to these dominant frameworks are often overlooked. In doing so, organisations risk punishing Chinese leaders for living by their values, values which in fact can greatly enrich New Zealand’s leadership landscape. This calls for serious reflection: if our definition of leadership continues to favour only those who are loudest or most visible, when will those who quietly excel, those who put their heads down and work diligently ever be recognised?

I argue that genuine inclusion is not about expecting individuals to conform but about fostering an environment that embraces values difference. Such an approach not only enhances overall wellbeing and satisfaction but also challenges the colonial belief that those who have been part of the dominant culture longer are somehow more “right” or legitimate. Ultimately, the issue is systemic, not individual. This is a national issue that calls for policy-level responses. Public institutions including government and parliament must lead by example in promoting culturally inclusive leadership and increasing the visibility of minority leaders, including those from the Chinese community.

When Silence Comes from Within

The findings revealed a range of systemic barriers hindering the recognition of Chinese leadership in New Zealand. However, this research also uncovered a more sobering reality: the undervaluing of Chinese leadership is not only institutional but, at times, internalised. During the participant recruitment phase of the research, I encountered more difficulty than expected. While most participants agreed to take part because the topic resonated with them, many admitted it was the first time they had considered the systemic underrepresentation of their community; some others were dismissive. I only received one formal decline from a potential participant, who expressed that they did not believe their experience would add much value to my research. This response stayed with me and made me reflect: how can I raise more awareness and ensure that members of the Chinese community themselves are passionate about this issue and motivated to help change the current underrepresentation of Chinese individuals in senior leadership roles?

One encounter, in particular, left a lasting impression. A Chinese business owner questioned the relevance of the research altogether, suggested that the Chinese population in New Zealand was too small to matter and that including Indian or broader Asian perspectives would make the study more impactful. His comments were disheartening for me to hear, not just for what they said, but for what they revealed: a quiet disbelief within our own community about our place and potential in New Zealand society. This raises a deeper question: Is the slow progress in Chinese integration partly due to our own silence? Our own uncertainty about whether we deserve to be seen, heard, and counted? Therefore, through conducting this research, I have also come to realise that the challenges are not solely external. Yes, there are changes that government agencies and organisations must undertake to build a more inclusive environment, but these efforts will only be effective if the community itself also recognises the need to stand up, speak out, and take accountability for its own advancement. At present, the constant issue of underrepresentation seems to be a result from that not enough members of the Chinese community are engaged or motivated to address the challenge we face.

This may be partly because of cultural differences or differences in personal circumstances. Many recent Chinese immigrants come to New Zealand seeking a more relaxed and less competitive lifestyle, which is what New Zealand is known for in the market of migrant countries (Yeung, 2012; Ip & Friesen, 2001). New Zealand is known for its laid-back culture and slower pace. As a result, those Chinese who chose to move here may be less driven to compete for leadership roles within high-pressure organisational environments. I personally know many highly educated and capable Chinese individuals who are working in roles that do not reflect their qualifications or potential, not because they are incapable, but because they are content with the quality of life they enjoy in New Zealand.

While this desire for a balanced life is understandable and valid, it also raises a critical question: if we do not strive to participate more fully, how can we expect others to recognise our value? Empowerment must come from within, and unless more Chinese professionals actively pursue leadership and visibility, our contributions will continue to go unnoticed.

Reclaiming Lost Potential

New Zealand has been facing an ongoing issue of brain drain, particularly among its skilled and educated workforce. In 2024 alone, more than 72,900 New Zealand citizens moved overseas, with a significant portion being young people aged 18 to 30—those who form the

backbone of the country's future workforce (Dann, 2025). More than half of these individuals moved to Australia, where living costs are often lower, and salaries are generally higher. The visa-free arrangement between the two countries makes this transition even easier.

This trend does not only affect those born in New Zealand. Many migrants, including highly skilled Chinese professionals who have gained citizenship here, are also leaving. Tan (2015) suggests that around 20% of Chinese individuals approved for permanent residency no longer live in New Zealand. From what I have observed and based on what participants in this study have shared, this movement is often a response to ongoing systemic barriers in New Zealand society. However, this is not just a story of individuals leaving. It is also a reflection of what they are leaving behind: systems that have not made enough space for them, workplaces that do not always value their contributions, and a wider environment that is still slow to acknowledge the strengths that come from cultural diversity.

In Chapter Two, the census revealed a concerning trend: the Chinese population in New Zealand earns a significantly lower median income compared to the total population. Specifically, the working-age group (15–64 years) among Chinese earn almost half of what the overall New Zealand workforce makes. The statistics also show that more than a quarter of Chinese hold a bachelor's degree, which is significantly higher than the national average. Many Chinese are employed as professionals and managers, yet despite this, a large number remain in entry- or mid-level positions. Very few have reached leadership or decision-making roles that would offer higher salaries, which is why their incomes do not reflect their qualifications. This suggests that Chinese workers are under-recognised and under-promoted in the workforce, contributing less visibly to society than their knowledge and skills would warrant. This is a major issue for New Zealand because if the country continues to underutilise ethnic professionals and skilled talent, many Chinese migrants may continue to leave for better opportunities elsewhere.

Liu's (2018) research on "circulatory transnational migration" provides a helpful way to understand these movements. Instead of migration being a one-way, permanent relocation, many Chinese migrants follow a more dynamic path—moving between their home country, New Zealand, and third destinations like Australia. Their decisions are often shaped by long-term goals, family needs, and the desire for a better quality of life. Terms like "step migration" and "astronauting" reflect this fluid, strategic way of living across borders.

This highlights a deeper problem. If Chinese professionals, many of whom already hold leadership potential, feel they are better off leaving than staying, then New Zealand risks missing out on the very contributions it needs. It is not just about losing workers; it is about losing future leaders and changemakers. Friendly immigration policies may attract new skilled migrants each year, but if we cannot create the conditions for them to thrive and feel valued, we will struggle to retain them. And in the long run, it is our society that pays the price.

Pathways to Success?

When I first chose to study Chinese leadership in New Zealand, I was curious to uncover what made some individuals successful. I hoped to identify common leadership traits or strategies that others in the Chinese community might learn from, hoping to provide a kind of roadmap to help more Chinese professionals advance into senior roles in New Zealand society.

However, it did not take long after beginning the interviews to realise that this assumption was flawed. Although the participants shared the same cultural roots with me, their leadership journeys were unique, shaped by highly individual life experiences and the specific social environments they navigated. I found myself facing an internal contradiction. While I viewed leadership as a dynamic, relational process rather than a fixed set of traits, I still found myself searching for repeatable characteristics that could explain success, much like the trait theory. However, good leadership should not be viewed as a set of traits but as a collaborative dynamic between leaders and their followers. Indeed, listening to participants' stories made it clear that there is no single formula for success. Therefore, how can we possibly replicate their success when what works for one Chinese leader might not work for another?

More importantly, not all Chinese professionals define success in the same way. For some, success means rising to the top of an organisation. For others, it means pursuing a fulfilling hobby, building a happy family, or simply living a balanced life. My earlier belief that all capable Chinese professionals should strive for senior leadership was, in itself, a reflection of my values and it is biased. In reality, people should be free to define success on their own terms, without external expectations. And yet, while we must respect individual choices, we also cannot ignore the worrying reality: Chinese professionals in New Zealand remain significantly under-represented in senior leadership roles, both in the public and private sectors. Given the community's high levels of education and professional skill, this disparity cannot be explained by lack of talent or ambition alone. It signals a deeper inequality in New Zealand society that

reflects the dominance of Anglo-Saxon cultural norms and a narrow definition of what a leader should look and sound like.

While this research began with the intention of identifying behavioural guidance to help Chinese professionals advance into senior leadership roles, it ultimately fell short of providing a clear formula for success. The diverse experiences of participants made it clear that no single pathway or set of traits could be universally applied. However, this study has revealed the underlying systemic barriers that racial minorities, such as the Chinese, face in Aotearoa New Zealand. The findings point to a collective responsibility. Addressing these issues requires coordinated efforts across organisations, government, education providers, and individuals.

5.2 Theoretical Contribution and Practical Implications

The literature review examined previous research on Chinese leadership in Western contexts, primarily focused on the outcome of Chinese leadership. However, such studies are very limited in the New Zealand context. There is little research that explores the unique dynamics of Chinese leadership in Aotearoa, let alone studies that highlight the intangible contributions Chinese leaders bring to organisations and society. Although this study did not fully answer all the research questions as originally intended, the findings offered important insights. It revealed deeper societal issues in New Zealand that need to be addressed if we are serious about creating a more culturally inclusive society. From both an academic and practical perspective, this research contributes to the ongoing conversation about how New Zealand can become a more inclusive and equitable place. The following section will outline these contributions in more detail.

5.2.1 Academic Contributions

Laying the Foundation for Inclusive Leadership Research in New Zealand

While developing this research project, I quickly realised how little work has been done on Chinese leadership in the New Zealand context. This became even more apparent during my preparation on literature review; I struggled to find studies focused on the lived experiences or contributions of leaders with Chinese heritage in Aotearoa. Most existing research concentrated

on cross-cultural comparisons, examining differences in leadership styles or values between Chinese and other Anglo-Saxon countries. Some research also focused on the systemic bias that racial minorities face in organisations. However, no research directly addressed the contributions of Chinese leaders within the broader systemic context of inequality, and rarely few have explored opportunities and necessarily in inclusion of leaders with Chinese heritage in New Zealand.

This particular research addressed the question of why organisations and governments should include more Chinese leaders in senior positions for decision-making. It also highlighted the valuable contributions leaders with Chinese heritage make to New Zealand, particularly add value in the broader conversation about inclusive leadership in the academic field. Most importantly, this study discovers the dominant Anglo-Saxon lens through which leadership is often assessed in New Zealand. Rather than judging leadership behaviour against what has traditionally worked in a Western framework, this research encourages society to broaden its understanding of effective leadership, to remain open to the strengths and values that culturally diverse leaders, like the leaders with Chinese heritage, can offer. In this way, my study serves as a stepping stone: it opens up a conversation that has long been overlooked and provides a foundation for future research and action. It also calls for an urgent shift in New Zealand, a system that supports deeper cultural integration and more meaningful intercultural collaboration. Because without research, there can be no awareness, and without awareness, there can be no urgency to change.

Lastly, given the insights this study offers, it raises important questions. Could other ethnic minority groups also be studied through this kind of strengths-based lens? What would it look like to explore the unique contributions of different communities, not from a deficit view but from one that recognises their leadership potential and value? My hope is that this research encourages more scholars to undertake research that appreciates the wisdom that diverse cultures offer, especially in leadership.

Cultural Values, Lived Experience, and Leadership

Existing literature on Chinese leadership has largely focused on defining leadership styles rooted in Confucian values or examining how Chinese leaders interact with non-Chinese followers in international or cross-cultural settings (e.g. Chen & Kao, 2009; House et.al., 2004). While these studies offer valuable insights, they often generalise Chinese leadership as a fixed,

culturally bound concept. More critically, they tend to overlook the nuanced experiences of leaders with Chinese heritage who have grown up as minorities in Western societies, particularly in New Zealand.

This study contributes a new and important perspective by revealing the complex interplay between cultural heritage, personal experience, and leadership practice. It shows that while traditional Chinese values do influence leadership behaviours, these values alone do not define individual leadership styles. Rather, participants' unique life experiences significantly shape how they lead, think, and relate to others in the workplace. By capturing this variability in leadership styles among participants, the study challenges the idea that leaders with a shared cultural background should be understood or evaluated as a homogenous group. It affirms the value of intersectionality, which is the notion that aspects of identity such as ethnicity, migration background, gender, and upbringing interact in complex ways to shape an individual's worldview, values, and leadership style (Skouteris et. al., 2024; Luiz & Terziev, 2024).

This more nuanced perspective calls for a shift in how leadership is studied in diverse societies like New Zealand. Rather than relying solely on cultural categories or ethnic labels, future research should examine how personal experiences, upbringing, and social context shape leadership styles. This study encourages scholars to move beyond cultural essentialism and consider the complex realities of individuals whose identities are shaped by multiple factors. Not only does this challenge stereotypes of "Chinese leadership," but it also reminds us of that concepts like "white leadership" or "women leadership" are equally diverse and should not be confined to a single label shaped by bias or assumptions. For example, Parker (2005) emphasises that women's leadership is not a uniform category, it intersects with racial, cultural, and socioeconomic factors that shape how leadership is understood and enacted. In sum, leadership identity is deeply contextual and must be examined through an intersectional lens that resists reductive labels.

Reframing Leadership Through Eastern Perspectives

One of the key observations throughout this research is how much of the existing literature on Chinese leadership in Western contexts tends to evaluate Chinese leaders against non-Chinese or Western leadership norms. As a result, any differences between Chinese values and dominant cultural expectations are often viewed as barriers or weaknesses.

This pattern is reflected in much of the academic literature, especially those that examines how Chinese leaders interact with non-Chinese followers in international or cross-cultural settings (e.g. Chen & Kao, 2009; Lin et al., 2018). Where there is a lack of alignment, studies have sometimes framed Chinese leadership as having a negative psychological impact on non-Chinese followers. However, what my research has shown is that many of the difficulties faced by Chinese leaders in career progression do not come from a lack of leadership ability, but rather from cultural mismatches and systemic bias. This is consistent with research by Kim et al. (2022) discussed in Chapter Two, which found that Asian leaders were perceived as effective once they were appointed to leadership roles, but often faced significant barriers to getting there in the first place.

Even if cultural differences do sometimes lead to misunderstandings or tension at work, this is not a challenge that is unique to leaders with Chinese heritage. Any cultural gap between leaders and followers can produce similar dynamics. It is important to recognise that these leaders are not ineffective. In many cases, they have been appointed to leadership roles because of the unique contributions and perspectives shaped by their cultural backgrounds. In academic research, we should focus on exploring how to better support and understand leaders, rather than on the perceived shortcomings of their leadership differences, so that their strengths can be fully realised.

This raises a larger question: why are Chinese leadership styles still being assessed through frameworks grounded in Western assumptions? In a multicultural country like Aotearoa New Zealand, where diversity is increasing, it seems both limiting and unfair to judge leadership effectiveness through a dominant cultural lens. Traditionally, leadership research has been heavily influenced by European scholars, particularly from Anglo-Saxon countries. As our societies change, it is time for our academic thinking to evolve as well.

This research was guided by Eastern perspectives, especially those shaped by Confucian thinking and traditional values. My own background and experiences as a researcher with Chinese heritage have played a role in shaping how I approached and framed this work. I believe this adds value to leadership research by offering an alternative lens that is often under-represented in Western academic spaces. Rather than reinforcing dominant assumptions, I have tried to contribute to a broader understanding of leadership, one that is more inclusive and reflective of the cultural realities we live in.

I believe the future of leadership research lies within the poststructuralist approach to leadership, which encourages us to move away from fixed definitions and appreciate the richness that comes from diverse ways of leading (Ford, 2022). Rather than asking whether someone fits into a predetermined leadership model, we should be asking how we can recognise and support different forms of leadership to thrive. In doing so, we not only help create more inclusive and effective organisations, but we also expand and enrich our academic understanding of what leadership truly means.

5.2.2 Practical Implications

By conducting this research, I have gained deeper insight into the underrepresentation of Chinese leaders in New Zealand. The challenges and opportunities discussed earlier have made me realise that change requires a collective effort, not just from organisations as I first thought, but also from within the Chinese community, the education sector, and the government. The next section outlines the practical implications of this research across four key areas, highlighting how different groups can help create a more inclusive leadership landscape. The implications and recommendations below are derived from what participants have said in 4.4.5, the opportunity for greater inclusion, my own experience, and a combination of empirical research findings.

Role of Government and Public Sector

The findings revealed that there were systemic barriers within organisations that hindered the progression of individuals with Chinese heritage into senior leadership roles. Some of these challenges also reflected broader issues in New Zealand's macro social environment. For example, geopolitical tensions had shaped public perceptions of the Chinese community, often in ways that inhibited their full participation in society and limited their ability to contribute meaningfully.

This reminded me of a video I watched years ago, a speech by Helene Wong, author of *Being Chinese: A New Zealander's Story*, in which she explored her cultural identity and New Zealand's past approach to multicultural inclusion. In the video, I recall that she highlighted that Chinese people in New Zealand had long faced prejudice and discrimination, particularly during the 1990s, when a wave of migrants arrived from mainland China. She noted that

Chinese communities were often judged based on assumptions, partly because the government had allowed migration without preparing existing New Zealand residents for the cultural shift. This lack of support created social tension, as many people suddenly found themselves living alongside others who looked, spoke, and lived differently, with little guidance or context. This position is supported by research from Ho and Bedford (1998), who argued that immigration policy changes in New Zealand did not adequately address post-arrival settlement challenges. In particular, migrants who entered under the business category and opened small businesses. They often have limited English capability and faced greater barriers to cultural integration into New Zealand society.

Reflecting on this, I came to realise the powerful role the government had played in shaping social narratives. The stories it chose to tell—and omit—significantly influenced public attitudes. I believe the government continues to hold the greatest responsibility for shifting current public perceptions of Chinese communities, just as it has done in other areas where it has sought to create social change.

Firstly, the New Zealand government plays an important role in improving Chinese leadership visibility by encouraging inclusion across public bodies. The significance of increasing Chinese leadership visibility is vital for building confidence, especially among younger generations. It sends a clear message that Chinese New Zealanders are trusted and valued. Representation should be both symbolic and meaningful, reflecting the diverse experiences within the broader Chinese community.

Ministers follow the Public Service Commission's Board Appointment and Induction Guidelines, which emphasise diversity in ethnicity, gender, and experience when nominating candidates to Crown boards and advisory panels (Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission, n.d.). These appointments are merit-based but should also reflect New Zealand's demographic makeup, including ethnic communities. While ministers cannot appoint members to Parliament, they can nominate Chinese individuals for board and committee roles, creating pathways to leadership and visibility in government contexts. This approach aligns with the Crown's increasing expectation that boards should represent the full diversity of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Furthermore, the government can enhance the visibility of Chinese leaders by encouraging higher voter turnout among the Chinese community in New Zealand. Low participation in

elections has contributed to limited political representation of Chinese New Zealanders in key government roles. Research indicates that Chinese communities historically have lower rates of voter participation due to barriers such as language difficulties and engagement gaps (Zhao, 2023). To address this, civic education and outreach programs targeted at ethnic communities could broaden the pool of potential leaders and promote greater participation in democratic and governance roles. I recommend any effort to increase voter participation must be designed and led by those who understand the cultural and structural reasons behind the current trends. These initiatives need to be culturally appropriate and responsive to the needs of the Chinese community.

In making these recommendations, I also want to acknowledge the work already being done by the Ministry for Ethnic Communities, including its Nominations Service (Ministry for Ethnic Communities, 2023). This service aims to increase the representation of ethnic communities on public boards and advisory groups by supporting organisations to identify potential candidates. While this is a step in the right direction, through my conversation with a former employee has suggested that the service has not always achieved its intended outcomes. Despite good intentions, the efforts often stay at a surface level and fail to address the deeper causes of underrepresentation. The nomination process has been described as a way to meet diversity goals for appearance's sake, rather than bringing real change. Although evaluating the effectiveness of these initiatives is beyond the scope of this study, and my assumption of ineffectiveness is not supported by impartial research, these reflections are important to consider in broader discussions about what true inclusion means in the public sector.

Secondly, the government should leverage Chinese culture as a form of soft power to promote social cohesion and mutual understanding among general public. Despite the long history of Chinese settlement in New Zealand, public exposure to Chinese culture remains limited. The stories of Chinese New Zealanders—who they are, how they arrived, and what values they hold—are rarely told in mainstream education or media. I believe the government has an important role to play in supporting cultural education as a tool to reduce xenophobia and racial misunderstanding. Partnering with museums, schools, and media organisations to share stories, traditions, and values from the Chinese community will help normalise multiculturalism and foster a greater sense of inclusion.

Auckland, as the most diverse city in the country, provides a strong example. Its large Chinese population and active cultural celebrations have helped many non-Chinese residents become

more familiar with Chinese customs. However, in other regions, especially parts of the South Island, opportunities for cultural education are still limited. Even if the Chinese population is small, it remains crucial to educate all New Zealanders on the values and contributions of this community. The government should take the opportunity to collaborate with the media to enhance the visibility of Chinese culture and foster multicultural understanding across the country. Initiatives such as movies, documentaries, and other resources focused on promoting Chinese culture need government support to increase cultural exposure. However, it is not enough for these materials to simply be created, they must also be actively supported and promoted by the government. Without adequate funding and nationwide promotion, these works may fail to reach a wide audience and are unlikely to spark the public interest needed to drive meaningful social change.

Thirdly, the government needs to emphasise the importance of enhancing diverse cultural education and cultural competence skills development in schools. There is a positive shift toward greater recognition of Māori culture in New Zealand. The introduction of Matariki as a public holiday and the increased focus on Māori history and values in schools reflect a deeper appreciation of Māori heritage (Rowe, 2022). However, with New Zealand's growing cultural diversity, I believe the government should also encourage schools to teach children about a wider range of cultural values, behaviours, and skills—moving beyond surface-level elements such as food, clothing, and history.

The current history curriculum in New Zealand, as outlined by Rowe (2022), is expected to teach Year 7–8 students about the country's early Irish, Chinese, Indian, and Pacific communities. According to the resource:

Students' understanding of the ethnic, cultural and religious groups that comprise Aotearoa New Zealand – and their contributions to our current milieu – will deepen through study of early Irish, Chinese, Indian and Pacific communities. They will learn about the barriers to participation these groups often faced, and the ways in which they retain their unique identities today.

It is encouraging to see that New Zealand students are given the opportunity to learn about the histories and contributions of racial minorities. However, this raises a critical question: to what extent does this limited history curriculum equip students with the skills needed to navigate

culturally diverse environments? And how effectively does it promote a more inclusive society in Aotearoa New Zealand?

In recent years, I have tutored an undergraduate course at Waikato Management School at the University of Waikato. The course aimed to equip students with the skills to work effectively in multicultural teams. It introduced frameworks such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Hall's communication styles, and the concept of cultural humility. From my observation, many local New Zealand students had not been taught to place much emphasis on cross-cultural understanding prior to university. As a result, several of them did not view this course as an important part of their degree. Due to the limits of my role and experience as a tutor, I am not yet in a position to offer detailed solutions on how to redesign such courses to better engage students. While I acknowledge the university's strong efforts to encourage cultural competence among students at the tertiary level, I believe this kind of education needs to begin much earlier so that it becomes a natural and essential part of a child's development. My experience has made it clear that cultural understanding should be integrated into a child's learning journey from an early age and recognised as a critical life skill for participating in an increasingly diverse society.

I believe the government acts as an "invisible hand" not just in the economy, but also in shaping national values. In a country as diverse as New Zealand, the government has a responsibility to lead the way in promoting social inclusion, not only through words but through continuous action and policy. It is my hope that the government will go beyond stating that multiculturalism is valuable and instead implement meaningful policies that drive positive change, helping New Zealand become a place where people of all backgrounds can live together with greater understanding, resilience, and hope in an increasingly complex world.

The Role of Private and Not-for-Profit Organisations

While it is crucial for the government to lead long-term efforts to reshape public perceptions and foster a more inclusive national environment, organisations also have a key role to play in the short to medium term recognising and supporting the talents of Chinese professionals. Not only to enhances organisational wellbeing but also contributes meaningfully to a more inclusive society.

Firstly, organisations should adopt existing intercultural frameworks in employee cultural competency training to foster a more inclusive workplace. This research found that participants

of Chinese heritage often share common cultural values, such as collectivism, respect for elders, and an emphasis on building strong interpersonal relationships. These values align with established intercultural frameworks, such as the GLOBE study and high- and low-context communication theories (i.e. Chhokar et.al., 2007; Meyer, 2014). Although there may be slight variations among individuals from mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Malaysia, many of these underlying principles remain consistent across societies influenced by Confucian traditions. Therefore, organisations can draw on these frameworks and collaborate with cultural consultants or experts to design meaningful workshops and training initiatives.

Importantly, such training should go beyond basic cultural awareness and instead equip staff to navigate real-life intercultural challenges. By fostering more empathetic and collaborative teams, the aim is not only to improve day-to-day cross-cultural communication but also to create a workplace culture that actively values diversity and encourages genuine cooperation. Understanding leadership as a dynamic interaction between leaders and followers, this type of training is crucial for enhancing professional leaders' intercultural competence when guiding diverse teams. Equally, it should empower followers to develop cultural humility and acquire the skills needed to support leaders who bring different cultural perspectives—such as Chinese leaders whose approaches may not align with dominant leadership norms. In doing so, the training strengthens both sides of the leadership relationship, making inclusion a shared responsibility rather than the sole burden of minority leaders.

Through a meta-analysis of diversity training in organisations, Kalinoski et al. (2013) found that the design of the training, the motivation of participants, and the method of delivery significantly influence the effectiveness of such initiatives. I strongly recommend that organisations invest in well-designed, outcomes-focused, and practical training—otherwise, these sessions risk wasting time and resources without driving any real change. While these initiatives may not immediately increase the number of Chinese professionals in senior roles, they can play a crucial role in reducing unconscious bias and creating an environment where Chinese employees feel respected, empowered, and able to contribute fully.

Secondly, I believe mentorship and networking opportunities should be intentionally designed to include staff from all cultural backgrounds, particularly middle managers who have the potential to move into senior leadership roles. As previously mentioned, research has shown that the “bamboo ceiling” often hinders Chinese professionals not at entry or middle levels, but when it comes to progressing into senior leadership (Hyun, 2005). These senior positions

typically require strong internal and external networks which can be supported through inclusive events, cross-level networking opportunities, and programmes that connect emerging leaders with senior decision-makers. From my own observations, the current corporate mentoring frameworks are often based on pre-existing personal relationships. Because Chinese professionals are often underrepresented in mainstream social and leadership networks, they may have been excluded from informal mentoring pathways in the past. However, organisations have the power to build new cultures of inclusion that connect senior leaders with future leaders through intended social events that encourage them to build relationships outside work hours.

Thirdly, organisations should move beyond simply promoting diversity and place greater emphasis on fostering genuine inclusion, not only as part of organisational culture but also in the broader community in which they operate. While diversity refers to the presence of difference, it is not enough on its own. Without inclusion, organisations risk creating cultural mismatches that hinder performance. In such environments, diversity may exist on paper, but meaningful participation and influence are often absent. Moreover, meta-analyses have shown that diversity alone does not automatically lead to innovation or improved performance. These benefits are only shown when inclusive practices are in place, such as engaging diverse voices in decision-making, ensuring equitable access to information and resources, and creating opportunities for all employees to grow (Zhao et al., 2025). Inclusion is what allows diversity to be felt, experienced, and leveraged. It enables individuals not just to be present, but to contribute fully and authentically.

To achieve this, organisations must educate themselves on global best practices in DEI, embedding these principles into the heart of their organisational culture, not as a one-off initiative, but as a core strategic priority. A practical step in this direction is to diversify recruitment and promotion panels. Involving individuals with cultural competence and lived experience of marginalisation can help reduce bias, improve fairness in selection processes, and better recognise the unique strengths that candidates from underrepresented backgrounds offer.

Moreover, organisations should prioritise not only internally but also inclusion within the broader community. Corporate responsibility encompasses four key dimensions: ethical conduct, social responsibility, environmental responsibility, and economic responsibility. Yet, as Hall (2023) highlighted in his Master's dissertation, social responsibility is often overlooked

in ESG reporting and annual corporate disclosures. His research revealed a notable absence of social responsibility in sustainability discussions at governmental decision-making tables. This gap suggests that inclusion should not be confined to an organisation's internal operations but should also extend to how it engages with stakeholders and contributes to creating inclusive local environments. By embracing social responsibility as a core component of corporate inclusion, organisations can play a meaningful role in fostering social cohesion and making the world a more equitable place. In practical terms, this means engaging actively with local communities and iwi, hosting social events that are open to the general public to raise awareness of cultural diversity, and maintaining strong, respectful relationships with diverse customer groups. It also involves demonstrating cultural humility, adapting to different cultural norms, and showing genuine respect for the values and traditions of the local environment.

Lastly, to further enhance leadership inclusion, organisations should offer leadership development programmes tailored to the needs of staff from diverse cultural backgrounds. The findings suggest that there is currently a lack of targeted support to help minority leaders, especially for those of Chinese heritage, to progress from middle management into senior leadership roles. There is hesitation among Chinese professionals about stepping into leadership positions, especially within diverse teams, partially due to cultural barriers and insecurities. This was particularly evident among those who migrated to New Zealand as adults or grew up overseas. While diversity training provides the knowledge needed to operate in multicultural environments, the development of leadership requires more than knowledge alone. Organisations must go further by actively supporting aspiring leaders, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds, to put this knowledge into practice and grow into leadership roles.

In academic research, leadership development has been shaped by four key perspectives: functionalist, interpretivist, dialogical, and critical (Carroll, 2023). According to her book, experience is an essential part of learning leadership, particularly through “critical moments,” which are major turning points or smaller, ongoing experiences that influence leadership growth. In consideration of the complexity of how we learn and grow in leadership, as well as the variety of these four perspectives, important questions arise about how organisations should design leadership development programmes for their future leaders. I am not in a position to prescribe a specific type of programme, as the most effective approach will depend on the organisation's context and the kind of leadership it aims to foster. However, the core goal of

any such initiative should be to equip potential leaders with the confidence and capabilities to progress into more senior positions.

At the same time, organisations must also create a culture that encourages aspiring leaders from minority backgrounds to recognise their own potential, take ownership of their leadership journeys, and feel empowered to step forward. Leadership development should not be a passive process, organisations have a responsibility to actively cultivate inclusive leadership by identifying, supporting, and promoting diverse talent from within. When organisations invest in the leadership potential of their employees, they not only strengthen their internal culture and lead to increased employee satisfaction but also help redefine what leadership can look like in a truly inclusive society.

The Role of Education Provider

Apart from politics, I believe that education holds the greatest power to shape social narratives, especially as our society strives for a better, more inclusive future. The influence of education can have either positive or negative effects in the long run, depending on how it is delivered. As previously discussed, the government should play an important role in enhancing cultural competence education across the school system. However, while systemic policy change may take years to implement, education providers can take proactive steps now, as they hold more immediate impact on the students in New Zealand.

Firstly, to enhance inclusion among children in Aotearoa New Zealand and support the development of future diverse leaders, schools must prioritise the careful selection and professional development of teachers who are equipped to work effectively with culturally diverse learners. While it is important for children to learn how to navigate cultural differences, research shows that teachers play a critical role in shaping students' attitudes, values, and social behaviours (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In multicultural classrooms, culturally responsive teaching not only improves student engagement and academic outcomes but also fosters greater empathy, cross-cultural understanding, and social cohesion. Educators who demonstrate fairness, cultural humility, and openness are likely to have a lasting influence on how children view leadership, authority, and diversity.

Cultural identity is an inseparable part of one's identity, "personal narratives and cultural stories are vital teaching content and methodology" (Gay, 2018, p. 68). According to Evans and Taylor (2025) when teachers actively affirm students' cultural identities, they contribute to the

development of positive self-concept and reduce the long-term impacts of marginalisation. This is particularly important for children from ethnic minority backgrounds, who may otherwise internalise deficit views about their leadership potential. By selecting and equipping teachers with the necessary skills to implement culturally responsive pedagogies in their teaching practices, schools can help all students develop the cultural literacy and ethical awareness needed to thrive in a diverse society. This early foundation is essential for cultivating future leaders who value inclusion and are prepared to lead in increasingly multicultural environments.

Secondly, tertiary education providers should reframe graduate outcomes to prioritise intercultural competence as a core attribute for success in today's increasingly diverse workforce. Research supports this shift in focus. Deardorff (2006) and Leask (2009) argue that intercultural competence is not an innate trait, it must be explicitly taught, practised, and assessed in order to be meaningfully developed. While many universities (e.g. the University of Waikato and the University of Auckland) offer papers on diversity and intercultural communication, these courses are often overly theoretical and lack opportunities for students to apply their learning in practical, collaborative settings.

From my experience tutoring an intercultural communication paper at the University of Waikato, I observed that assessments largely focused on individual theoretical understanding. There were few opportunities for students to develop or be evaluated on their ability to work effectively across cultures in real-world contexts. This lack of applied learning risks producing graduates who may understand diversity as a concept but remain underprepared to navigate or lead in multicultural environments. This concern is especially relevant in Aotearoa New Zealand, where the workforce is becoming increasingly multicultural and leadership requires the ability to recognise, respect, and leverage cultural differences.

This recommendation directly responds to the problem identified in the research: that leaders with Chinese heritage often face cultural misrecognition and limited pathways to senior leadership. By embedding intercultural competence and inclusive leadership principles into core degree programmes, tertiary institutions can better prepare future leaders to foster inclusive environments.

The Role of Chinese Professionals

One of the important insights I gained from conducting this research is that increasing the underrepresentation of Chinese individuals in senior leadership roles cannot rely solely on

external systems or institutions. The effort must also come from within us. We need to recognise the importance of raising our voices, being seen, and having the confidence to step forward when opportunities arise.

The Chinese professionals who seek change must first overcome their reluctance and fear to lead multicultural teams. As participant H previously mentioned, many people of Chinese heritage, particularly those who migrated to New Zealand as adults, are hesitant to lead multicultural teams or take on visible leadership roles. Cultural upbringing, language barriers, and fear of making mistakes often contribute to this reluctance. But for those who care about creating change in New Zealand society, we must overcome this hesitation. Leadership begins with taking responsibility, being brave in the face of challenges, and being willing to influence others. I understand that this can be challenging for many. I have lived in New Zealand for nine years and still feel that cultural differences sometimes create misunderstandings or make it harder to connect. But I have also experienced kindness and care from people of many different backgrounds. In building relationships, respect and curiosity are key, and I believe these values are already deeply rooted in Chinese culture. What often holds us back is not a lack of value, but a lack of confidence.

Moreover, building cross-cultural confidence by actively expanding professional networks is crucial for Chinese professionals to gain visibility and recognition. Social connections can provide access to resources and opportunities that may not be available within one's immediate work environment. For instance, New Zealand Asian Leaders is "a purpose-driven, non-profit organisation with a vision to accelerate and celebrate Asian leaders' contribution to Aotearoa New Zealand, Asia Pacific and globally" (New Zealand Asian Leaders, n.d.). Becoming a member of such an organisation and attending networking events can help Chinese professionals broaden their perspectives and engage with New Zealand's evolving diversity and inclusion landscape.

Beyond participating in initiatives specifically aimed at Asian leaders, it is also important for Chinese professionals to actively bridge intercultural communication gaps by attending events that involve people from a range of cultural backgrounds. Expanding networks beyond one's own cultural group is vital for fostering intercultural inclusion. Engaging with people from different walks of life requires a mindset of continuous learning and self-development. Learn from those you admire, observe how they lead, communicate, and influence others. Build respectful relationships with decision-makers, seek mentorship, and be open to feedback. Most

importantly, position yourself for future opportunities by stepping forward, even when it feels uncomfortable. Leadership is not only about capability, but also about visibility and the willingness to take up space.

Ultimately, we should take pride in and honour our cultural identity. I know many Chinese New Zealanders, especially second-generation migrants, struggle with cultural confidence. Some parents give their children Western names in the hope that they will be more accepted by the society. Many children grew up without learning the Chinese language or history in a meaningful way. While these decisions are understandable in the context of trying to fit into a society where Chinese culture is not always visible or celebrated, we must also find pride in who we are and where we come from. There is beauty in difference. By taking pride in our heritage, we can participate in multicultural environments without losing ourselves. As I believe authentic leadership is rooted in knowing and valuing your own identity.

5.3 Research Limitations

This study has addressed previously overlooked gaps, particularly in exploring the leadership experiences of individuals with Chinese heritage in Aotearoa New Zealand. Three key limitations emerged. First, the data lacked diversity, particularly across gender due to recruitment challenges. Second, the research was framed within an Anglo-Saxon leadership paradigm, which may have limited the recognition of culturally distinct leadership practices. Third, my personal connection to the topic may have influenced how findings were interpreted and presented. While these limitations do not diminish the study's contributions, they highlight the need for further research to develop a more inclusive view of leadership in New Zealand's multicultural landscape.

5.3.1 Lack of Richness in the Data

One of the key limitations of this study lies in the limited richness of the data, which was shaped by several intersecting factors. First, recruiting participants proved more challenging than anticipated, especially when attempted to connect with Chinese individuals in senior corporate leadership roles. While the original intention was to include leaders listed on NZX50 company

websites, it proved challenging to make direct contact with these individuals through public-facing platforms. Aside from a few participants accessed through my supervisor's networks, I faced barriers in accessing this relatively hidden and underrepresented group. Although I made every effort to contact potential candidates, primarily through LinkedIn and, where possible, via their work emails, I was unable to recruit the number of participants I initially aimed for (15 in total). Due to these recruitment challenges, I had to adjust my expectations. This challenge reflects broader issues of visibility and accessibility of Chinese professionals in high-level corporate roles in New Zealand, which in itself may be a symptom of the underrepresentation this research seeks to address.

Second, gender representation within the participant pool was unbalanced. Although gender was not an explicit selection criterion, I had hoped to include a more even mix of male and female participants. Of the 11 participants interviewed, only four were female, all of whom came from legal-related professions. This concentration raises questions about whether certain professional sectors such as law, offer more measurable or linear leadership pathways that may benefit some Chinese women, as their achievements are more visible and therefore more likely to be recognised for senior leadership roles. Based on these interviews, I formed the impression that female leaders were often selected for their expertise in legal contexts, rather than for demonstrating broader leadership qualities. This may help explain why Chinese female leaders appear to be even less represented in industries that emphasise abstract, strategic thinking and where success is harder to quantify, though this assumption requires further exploration.

While gender was not the primary focus of this research, its relevance emerged clearly in the early section (see Section 5.1.1). This insight also draws attention to a methodological limitation: the gender imbalance among participants constrained my ability to explore in greater depth how gender and cultural heritage intersect across a wider range of sectors. Several female participants expressed deeper frustration with the corporate environment and questioned whether their experiences were shaped more by gender, cultural background, or both. This recurring pattern, while insightful, reflects the limitations of the data and underscores the need for more diverse female perspectives. Ultimately, what emerged as a key insight, namely, the compounded barriers faced by women of Chinese heritage, also signals a constraint in the study's ability to examine this issue comprehensively.

Third, and perhaps most critically, I acknowledge that the richness of insights was limited by the design of the interview questions themselves. In the early stages of the research, I noticed

that certain questions overlapped or were too broad, leading to repetitive answers or vague responses. I often found myself saying, “You’ve already touched on this, but...” As mentioned in section 3.2.1, I realised the issues with predefined interview questions. Although I adjusted the order of the questions and asked follow-up questions in some later interviews, I recognise that the questions could have been designed more thoughtfully to elicit critical insights aligned with the central research aim: understanding how to support and increase the representation of Chinese leaders in New Zealand’s corporate environment. For example, I could have more deliberately asked participants about how Chinese cultural values have either enabled or hindered their career progression, or what advice they might offer to organisations and individuals seeking to advance Chinese representation in leadership roles. While many participants still shared valuable perspectives, I believe the study could have achieved greater depth had the interview questions been strategically reviewed.

Due to the limitations of time and the word constraints of my thesis, I was unable to fully achieve what I had hoped for. Moving forward, with additional time, future research would benefit from more targeted recruitment across different sectors, gender identities, and regional contexts to better reflect the diversity within Chinese communities in Aotearoa. It is important to take time and care in the recruitment process to ensure a wide and representative pool of participants. Moreover, future studies could examine gender more explicitly. For instance, a comparative study in New Zealand of male and female Chinese leaders could investigate whether women of Chinese heritage face distinct barriers compared to their male counterparts or if shared cultural challenges intersect with gendered expectations in unique ways.

5.3.2 Reliance on a Colonial Framework of Leadership

Another significant limitation of this study lies in its reliance on Anglo-Saxon or colonial frameworks for defining and evaluating leadership. As discussed in 5.1.2, the dominant leadership models used in Aotearoa New Zealand, and indeed in much of the global corporate world, often prioritise leadership characteristics such as public visibility, hierarchical position, decisiveness, and individual authority. These qualities are deeply rooted in Anglo-Saxon and colonial traditions of leadership and tend to marginalise alternative, culturally embedded leadership expressions.

This issue of leadership research within the context of colonising logics has been examined by scholars. For example, Ladkin (2025) critically investigates how Western epistemologies have influenced the field of management research. She offers alternative methodologies that move beyond colonising logics in order to produce knowledge that reflects diverse cultural and situational realities.

This research inadvertently reinforced the assumption that positional power equates to leadership effectiveness by focusing on Chinese individuals who currently hold or have held senior leadership roles. As a result, this study may have privileged a particular image of what it means to be a “successful leader,” while unintentionally excluding or devaluing quieter forms of leadership that do not fit within dominant Anglo-Saxon paradigms. This reflects a colonial logic: leadership is validated through formal titles and recognition by dominant systems, such as appointments by boards and executives. However, this narrow framing overlooks relational, subtle, and collective forms of leadership that are valued in many Chinese cultural contexts. For example, leading through harmony, humility, or moral integrity, which can also greatly benefit New Zealand society. Individuals who lead behind the scenes, support others without seeking recognition, or exert influence through their relationships often go unacknowledged under current leadership metrics. In my research, I was unable to identify such talent within the Chinese community in New Zealand, as the focus of my study was framed within an Anglo-Saxon leadership paradigm of selecting “successful senior leaders”.

Additionally, the sole focus on interviewing only the leaders led to a one-sided view of leadership effectiveness in the research. Since only the leaders' perspectives were included and they were selected based on their fit within dominant frameworks, the study was unable to capture how their leadership is actually experienced by others. I believe leadership should not be defined simply by status; rather, it is a social and interactive process. Without input from peers, followers, or team members, it is difficult to assess whether these leaders are viewed as inclusive, empowering, or impactful by those who work closely with them.

Future research should aim to challenge dominant colonising logics by recognising a broader range of culturally grounded leadership practices. It is essential to explore how culturally guided leadership can benefit New Zealand communities. This exploration should involve incorporating the voices of colleagues, community members, and followers to better understand the influence of the leader and assess the effectiveness and impact of various leadership styles. A multi-perspective and culturally sensitive approach would not only deepen

our understanding of leadership among Chinese individuals in Aotearoa but also expand the definition of what effective leadership can look like in diverse societies.

5.3.3 Researcher Vulnerability and Emotional Entanglement

A further limitation of this study stems from my personal and emotional connection to the research topic. As a Chinese person myself, this project was driven in large part by my own motivation to promote greater recognition of leaders with Chinese heritage in Aotearoa New Zealand. My investment in this issue gave me the passion and perseverance needed to pursue the research through challenging moments, and it allowed me to connect meaningfully with participants who shared similar cultural backgrounds.

However, this closeness also created potential risks of bias and over-identification. Although I aimed to present participants' narratives authentically, my own cultural lens inevitably shaped the framing of this thesis. In qualitative research, especially in areas involving identity and marginalisation, I worry that I am not a neutral observer that my subjectivity influenced the process. As a researcher, I often found myself resonating deeply with the experiences and values expressed by participants. In many cases, I recognised in their story's reflections of my own struggles, assumptions, and cultural beliefs. While this shared heritage and experience made it easier for me to understand their perspectives, it may also have limited my ability to maintain analytical distance. I frequently questioned whether someone without this cultural background would have selected the same themes, interpreted the same data in similar ways, or chosen the same quotes to represent participants' voices.

Looking ahead, I am passionate about continuing research on Chinese culture and identity in New Zealand. However, I recognise the value of collaborating with researchers from outside this cultural narrative. Such partnerships would help challenge my assumptions, refine my research questions, and support a more balanced interpretation of my findings. Engaging with diverse scholarly perspectives will ultimately strengthen the rigour and inclusiveness of my future work. Additionally, exploring how Chinese leadership can enhance New Zealand's capacity would be greatly enriched by support from cultures beyond my own. Such collaboration would add depth and strength to the research outcomes.

5.4 Personal Reflection

The thesis journey has been both supportive and lonely. As I progressed through my Master's degree, many of my friends completed their studies and moved on. Gradually, I lost my social circle. In the final six months of writing, I chose to isolate myself, but I also learnt to embrace that solitude. It became a space for reflection, growth, and quiet determination.

Looking back, the 2024–2025 period has been one of the most significant times of personal development in my life. I have learnt so much, not only in terms of academic knowledge but also about myself. For years, I was struggling with an eating disorder. I had been living with low energy, frequent mood swings, and an unhealthy relationship with food. It deeply affected both my professional and personal life. In early 2025, I decided to seek help from a dietitian and psychologist. Since then, I have been learning to care for myself again, to be kinder, more optimistic, and more accepting of who I am. As I write this reflection, I feel healthier and more at peace than I was a year ago.

This thesis journey also made me feel deeply connected to my ancestors. I was moved by the sacrifices they made, and I now understand more clearly that it is only because we stand on the shoulders of those who came before us that we can see further and dream bigger. I have developed great respect for them. Through this work, I hope to contribute to the conversation around inclusive leadership in New Zealand and one day be able to say that I have given more to this society than I have taken from it.

Of course, there are things I wish I had done better, such as preparing earlier, managing my time more wisely, staying organised, and practising greater self-discipline. However, I have chosen not to let those regrets define my journey. One of the most important lessons I have learnt is how to be kind to myself. I believe that letting go of the past is necessary in order to step into a better future.

I have grown passionate about the topic of leadership, especially as I have come to see how many people in this world are driven by the desire to make it better. I deeply respect those who take responsibility for creating positive change. With all the political tensions, global conflicts, and civil rights movements happening around the world today, my hope is that leadership, when rooted in the right values, can still be a force for good.

Most of all, I wish to love the people around me more deeply and leave behind a positive influence wherever I go.

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter brought together the key insights from interviews with 11 senior leaders of Chinese heritage in Aotearoa New Zealand. Through both academic analysis and personal reflection, it explored how their experiences contribute to wider understandings of leadership, identity, and inclusion.

The findings affirm that cultural frameworks like the GLOBE study remain relevant, as shared Chinese cultural values continue to shape leadership behaviours across diverse migration paths. These frameworks offer a useful starting point for developing training programmes and cultural competence strategies in increasingly diverse workplaces. However, this study also challenges the notion of culture as fixed. Leadership identity emerged not only from cultural heritage but also from personal journeys, shaped by family values, career paths, and the experience of navigating minority status in New Zealand.

Crucially, the study highlights that leadership in New Zealand is still largely framed through Western ideals, often at the expense of alternative leadership styles rooted in traditions of quiet influence, relational harmony, and collective responsibility. By centring the voices of Chinese leaders, this research questions whose leadership is recognised, and whose is overlooked. Rethinking leadership criteria is not simply an academic exercise; it is an urgent call to make space for diverse ways of leading.

Inclusion, as the findings suggest, resulted from both structural and personal. While organisations and governments must create enabling environments, individuals also play a role. Many participants spoke of the courage it took to step forward, to be visible, and to speak with conviction in spaces where they were often the only ones of their background. Their stories remind us that inclusion is not just something we build into systems, it is something people choose to practise, every day.

Although this study has its limitations, it offers a starting point for deeper, more collaborative inquiry into what leadership could look like in a genuinely inclusive society. Future research

should move beyond individual narratives to include peers, followers, and communities, challenging the narrow frames through which leadership is often assessed.

Above all, this study is an invitation to listen more carefully to value leadership in its many forms, and to co-create a future in which all New Zealanders can lead, thrive, and belong.

References

- Alon, I. (2011). *Chinese culture, organisational behavior, and international business management*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bedford, R. (2003). New Zealand: The politicization of immigration [Research Note]. Migration Research Group, The University of Waikato.
- Bevir, M., & Rhodes, R. A. W. (2012). Interpretivism and the analysis of traditions and practices. *Critical Policy Studies*, 6(2), 201–208. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2012.689739>
- Bond, M. H., & Hofstede, G. (1988). *The Confucian connection: From cultural roots to economic growth*. *Organizational Dynamics*, 16(4), 5–21.
- Bonnett, G. (2024, December). *Counting people and pay: The ministry with one senior Asian manager*. NZ Herald. Retrieved July 2, 2025, from NZ Herald website: <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/counting-people-and-pay-the-ministry-with-one-senior-asian-manager/4TE3TOBYVFKVHEA2HYMAEMT4A/>
- Burr, V. (1995). *An introduction to social constructionism*. Routledge.
- Carroll, B (2022). Leadership learning and development. In Carroll, B., Ford, J., & Taylor, S. (Eds.), *Leadership: Contemporary critical perspectives* (3rd edition.) (PP. 35-53). SAGE.
- Chan, A., & Spoonley, P. (2017). The politics and construction of identity and childhood: Chinese immigrant families in New Zealand. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 7(1), 17–28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2043610617694730>
- Chang, C. Y., & Lee, O. (2013). *Confucianism: A modern interpretation* (2012 ed.). World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1142/8346>
- Chao, A. A., & Kao, H. S. R. (2005). Paternalistic leadership and subordinate stress in Taiwanese enterprises. *Research in Applied Psychology*, 27, 111–131.
- Chen, H.-Y., & Kao, H. S.-R. (2009). Chinese paternalistic leadership and non-Chinese subordinates' psychological health. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 20(12), 2533–2546. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585190903363839>
- Chen, M. (2023). Comparison of high and low context differences between China and the West. *Frontiers in Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(8), 161–168. <https://doi.org/10.54691/fhss.v3i8.5553>
- Cheng, B. S., Chou, L. F., Wu, T. Y., Huang, M. P., & Farh, J. L. (2004). Paternalistic leadership and subordinate response: Establishing a leadership model in Chinese organisations. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 7(1), 89–117.
- Cheung, H. (2022, November 30). Two female leaders had a historic meeting. They got asked about their age. *The Washington Post*.
- Chhokar, J. S., Brodbeck, F. C., & House, R. J. (Eds.). (2007). *Culture and leadership across the world: The GLOBE book of in-depth studies of 25 societies* (1st ed.). Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203936665>
- China Highlights. (n.d.). *The Han — China's majority ethnic group*. <https://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/nationality/han.htm#:~:text=The%20ethnic%20Han%20in%20China,and%20along%20the%20Pearl%20River>
- Chow, I. H.-S. (2007). Culture and leadership in Hong Kong. In J. S. Chhokar, F. C. Brodbeck, & R. J. House (Eds.), *Culture and leadership across the world: The GLOBE book of in-depth studies of 25 societies* (pp. 909–946). Psychology Press.
- CPAC Institute. (2021, October 18). *CPAC Institute study reveals severe underrepresentation of Chinese Canadian leadership across all sectors*. CPAC Institute. <https://cpac-canada.ca/publications>

- Dann, L. (2025, May 13). *Young Kiwis lead brain drain as migration falls below 30,000 departures at record*. NZ Herald. <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/immigration-kiwi-brain-drain-has-peaked-despite-another-year-of-record-departures/2QC3FJIBFRHODKAQ2UNLBMYBTM/>
- Davidson, A. P., & Dai, R. (2008). Moving through memory: Chinese migration to New Zealand in the 1990s. In K. E. Kuah & A. P. Davidson (Eds.), *At home in the Chinese diaspora* (pp. 94–110). Palgrave Macmillan UK. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/reader.action?docID=370411&ppg=106>
- Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 10(3), 241–266. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315306287002>
- Diversity Council Australia. (2014). *Cracking the cultural ceiling: Future proofing your business in the Asian century*. Diversity Council Australia.
- Eaton, J. S. (1998). Gender issues in transitional China. *Multicultural Education*, 6(2), 32–36.
- Evans, C. M., & Taylor, C. S. (Eds.). (2025). *Culturally Responsive Assessment in Classrooms and Large-Scale Contexts: Theory, Research, and Practice*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003392217>
- Farh, J. L., & Cheng, B. S. (2000). A cultural analysis of paternalistic leadership in Chinese organisations. In J. T. Li, A. S. Tsui, & E. Weldon (Eds.), *Management and organisations in China: Current issues and future research directions* (pp. 84–127). Macmillan.
- Figure.NZ. (n.d.). *Estimated and projected Chinese population in New Zealand*. <https://figure.nz/chart/hkfyPCelw2Iox49q>
- Ford, J. (2022). Leadership, poststructuralism and the performative turn. In Carroll, B., Ford, J., & Taylor, S. (Eds.), *Leadership: Contemporary critical perspectives* (3rd edition.) (PP. 35-53). SAGE.
- Foucault, M. (1966). *The Order of Things: An archaeology of the human sciences* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315660301>
- France, D. (2013). Appo Hocton – New Zealand’s first Chinese immigrant. *New Zealand China Friendship Society*. <https://nzchinasociety.org.nz/appo-hohton-new-zealands-first-chinese-immigrant/>
- Friesen, W., & Ip, M. (2001). The new Chinese community in New Zealand: Local outcomes of transnationalism. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 10(2), 213–240. <https://doi.org/10.1177/011719680101000201>
- Fu, P. P., Wu, R., Yang, Y., & Ye, J. (2007). Chinese culture and leadership. In J. S. Chhokar, F. C. Brodbeck, & R. J. House (Eds.), *Culture and leadership across the world: The GLOBE book of in-depth studies of 25 societies* (pp. 877–906). Psychology Press.
- Gao, G. (1995). The challenge of facework: Cross-cultural and interpersonal issues. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 19(3), 455–458. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767\(95\)90011-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(95)90011-X)
- Gay, G. (2018). *Culturally responsive teaching: theory, research, and practice* (Third edition.). Teachers College Press.
- Gergen, K. J. (2023). *An Invitation to Social Construction: Co-Creating the Future*. (4th ed.). Sage Text UK.
- Hall, J. (2023). *Putting the S into ESG reporting: An investigation of director engagement with social responsibility in commercial entities* (Master’s dissertation). The University of Waikato.
- Hays, J. (n.d.). Confucianism, family, society, filial piety and relationships. *Facts and Details*. <https://factsanddetails.com/china/cat3/sub9/entry-5561.html>

- He, G., An, R., & Hewlin, P. F. (2019). Paternalistic leadership and employee well-being: A moderated mediation model. *Chinese Management Studies*, 13(3), 645–663. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CMS-10-2018-0724>
- He, G., Wang, Y., Zheng, X., Guo, Z., & Zhu, Y. (2022). Linking paternalistic leadership to work engagement among Chinese expatriates: A job demand-resource perspective. *International Journal of Manpower*, 43(4), 889–909. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJM-07-2020-0322>
- Henderson, A. (2003). Untapped talents: The employment and settlement experiences of skilled Chinese in New Zealand. In M. Ip (Ed.), *Unfolding history, evolving identity: The Chinese in New Zealand* (pp. 141–164). Auckland University Press.
- Ho, E., & Bedford, R. (1998). The Asian crisis and migrant entrepreneurs in New Zealand: Some reactions and reflections. *New Zealand Population Review*, 24(1), 71–101.
- Ho, E., Bedford, R., & Goodwin, J. (1998). Self-employment among Chinese immigrants in New Zealand. *Labour, Employment and Work in New Zealand*. <https://doi.org/10.26686/lew.v0i0.1024>
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing cultures: The Hofstede model in context. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>
- House, R. J., Hanges, P. J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P., & Gupta, V. (Eds.). (2004). *Culture, leadership, and organisations: The GLOBE study of 62 societies*. Sage.
- House, R., Javidan, M., Hanges, P., & Dorfman, P. (2002). Understanding cultures and implicit leadership theories across the globe: An introduction to Project GLOBE. *Journal of World Business*, 37(1), 3–10. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1090-9516\(01\)00069-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1090-9516(01)00069-4)
- Hwang, K. (1987). Face and Favor: The Chinese Power Game. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 92(4), 944–974. <https://doi.org/10.1086/228588>
- Hyun, J. (2005). *Breaking the bamboo ceiling: career strategies for Asians: the essential guide to getting in, moving up, and reaching the top*. Harper Business.
- Ip, M. (1995). Chinese New Zealanders: Old settlers and new immigrants. In S. W. Greif (Ed.), *Immigration and national identity in New Zealand: One people, two peoples, many peoples?* (pp. 161–199). The Dunmore Press Ltd.
- Ip, M. (1996). *Dragons on the long white cloud: The making of Chinese New Zealanders*. Tandem Press.
- Ip, M. (2003). *Unfolding history, evolving identity: The Chinese in New Zealand*. Auckland University Press.
- Ip, M. (2013). Chinese immigration to Australia and New Zealand. In C.-B. Tan (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of the Chinese diaspora* (1st ed., pp. 156–175). Routledge. <https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203100387-14/chinese-immigration-australia-new-zealand-manying-ip?context=ubx&refId=3c43f215-7db6-437a-88bf-3f9b899cdb91>
- Ip, M., & Friesen, W. (2001). The New Chinese Community in New Zealand: Local Outcomes of Transnationalism. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal: APMJ*, 10(2), 213–240. <https://doi.org/10.1177/011719680101000201>
- Javidan, M., & Dastmalchian, A. (2009). Managerial implications of the GLOBE project: A study of 62 societies. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 47(1), 41–58. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1038411108099289>
- Jones, E., & Killick, D. (2013). Graduate Attributes and the Internationalized Curriculum: Embedding a Global Outlook in Disciplinary Learning Outcomes. *Journal of Studies*

- in International Education*, 17(2), 165–182.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315312473655>
- Kalinoski, Z. T., Steele-Johnson, D., Peyton, E. J., Leas, K. A., Steinke, J., & Bowling, N. A. (2013). A meta-analytic evaluation of diversity training outcomes. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 34(8), 1076–1104. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.1839>
- Kennedy, J. C. (2007). Leadership and culture in New Zealand. In J. S. Chhokar, F. C. Brodbeck, & R. J. House (Eds.), *Culture and leadership across the world: The GLOBE book of in-depth studies of 25 societies* (pp. 397–432). Psychology Press.
- Kim, K. Y., Shen, W., Evans, R., & Mu, F. (2022). Granting leadership to Asian Americans: The activation of ideal leader and ideal follower traits on observers' leadership perceptions. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 37(6), 1157–1180.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-022-09794-3>
- Kim, Y., Lee, H., & Park, S. (2019, July 29). The Confucian tradition and politics. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. Oxford University Press.
<https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-e-9780190228637-e-991>
- Kong, H. (2007). *China: Five thousand years of history and civilization*. City University of Hong Kong Press.
- Küçükdeğirmenci, O. (2021). China's encounter with West in the 19th century: Power relations. *The Journal of Social Science*, 5(10), 333–348.
<https://doi.org/10.30520/tjsosci.963128>
- Kuhn, P. A. (2009). *Chinese among others: Emigration in modern times*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Kuhn, T. S. (1996). *The structure of scientific revolutions* (3rd ed.). University of Chicago Press.
- Ladkin, D. (2025). *Challenging colonizing logics within management research: Toward a broader view of management*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465–491.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312032003465>
- Lakey, P. N. (2007). East meets West: Chinese leadership research. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 12(2), 126–135. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0090-2616\(88\)90009-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0090-2616(88)90009-5)
- Lewellyn, K. B., & Muller-Kahle, M. I. (2020). The Corporate Board Glass Ceiling: The Role of Empowerment and Culture in Shaping Board Gender Diversity. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 165(2), 329–346. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04116-9>
- Li, J. (2023). China under Xi Jinping. *Journal of International Affairs (New York)*, 75(1), 261–272.
- Li, J., Ngin, P. M., & Teo, A. C. Y. (2007). Culture and leadership in Singapore: Combination of the East and the West. In J. S. Chhokar, F. C. Brodbeck, & R. J. House (Eds.), *Culture and leadership across the world: The GLOBE book of in-depth studies of 25 societies* (pp. 947–968). Psychology Press.
- Li, M., & Campbell, J. (2009). Accessing employment: Challenges faced by non-native English-speaking professional migrants. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 18(3), 371–395. <https://doi.org/10.1177/011719680901800303>
- Li, P. S., & Li, E. X. (2013). The Chinese overseas population. In C.-B. Tan (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of the Chinese diaspora* (1st ed., pp. 15–28). Routledge.
- Li, Z. H. (1986). *On history of ancient Chinese thought*. People's Publishing House.
- Liang, X., Sendjaya, S., & Abeysekera, L. (2021). Does acculturation affect one's implicit leadership theories? Evidence from Chinese professionals in Australia and China.

- Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 38(3), 979–1001.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10490-019-09695-9>
- Lin, L., Li, P. P., & Roelfsema, H. (2018). The traditional Chinese philosophies in intercultural leadership: The case of Chinese expatriate managers in the Dutch context. *Cross Cultural & Strategic Management*, 25(2), 299–336.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/CCSM-01-2017-0001>
- Liu, G. (2022). On socialist market economy: Why the shift from a planned economy. In C. Wang (Ed.), *40 years of reform and opening-up* (1st ed., pp. 19–23). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-6214-0_3
- Liu, L. S. (2018). *Chinese Transnational Migration in the Age of Global Modernity: The Case of Oceania* (First edition.). Taylor and Francis.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315438535>
- Lord, R. G., & Maher, K. J. (1993). *Leadership and information processing: Linking perceptions and performance*. Routledge.
- Lu, D. (2020). China's tough battles to achieve the centenary goals. *Journal of Chinese Economic and Business Studies*, 18(3), 203–207.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14765284.2020.1822723>
- Lu, J. G. (2021). A social network perspective on the bamboo ceiling: Ethnic homophily explains why East Asians but not South Asians are underrepresented in leadership in multiethnic environments. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, 2021(1), 13617.
<https://doi.org/10.5465/AMBPP.2021.13617abstract>
- Lu, J. G., Nisbett, R. E., & Morris, M. W. (2020). Why East Asians but not South Asians are underrepresented in leadership positions in the United States. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 117(9), 4590–4600.
<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1918896117>
- Luiz, J. M., & Terziev, V. (2024). Axes and fluidity of oppression in the workplace: Intersectionality of race, gender, and sexuality. *Organization (London, England)*, 31(2), 295–315. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13505084221098252>
- Mansur, J., Sobral, F., & Goldszmidt, R. (2017). Shades of paternalistic leadership across cultures. *Journal of World Business*, 52(5), 702–713.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2017.06.003>
- Martinez, P. G. (2003). Paternalism as a positive form of leadership in the Latin American context: Leader benevolence, decision-making control and human resource management practices. In M. Elvira & A. Davila (Eds.), *Managing human resources in Latin America: An agenda for international leaders* (pp. 75–93). Routledge.
- Meyer, E. (2014). *The culture map: Breaking through the invisible boundaries of global business*. PublicAffairs.
- Ministry for Ethnic Communities. (2023). *The nominations and appointments process*. Ministry for Ethnic Communities.
<https://www.ethniccommunities.govt.nz/programmes/nominations>
- Ministry for Ethnic Communities. (n.d.). *Chinese Poll Tax*.
<https://www.ethniccommunities.govt.nz/resources/research-and-reports/chinese-poll-tax/#:~:text=That%20word%20was%20'sorry'%20and,19th%20and%20early%2020th%20centuries.>
- Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment. (2018). *Working with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds*. New Zealand Government.
- Minority Rights Group International. (2020). *Taiwan: World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples*. Minority Rights Group International.
<https://minorityrights.org/country/taiwan/>

- National Geographic Society. (2025). Confucianism. *National Geographic Education*.
<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/confucianism/>
- New Zealand Asian Leaders. (n.d.). *Our vision*. <https://nzasianleaders.org/our-vision/>
- Ogihara, Y. (2023). Chinese culture became more individualistic: Evidence from family structure, 1953–2017 [Version 1; peer review: 1 approved with reservations]. *F1000Research*, 12, Article 10. <https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.128448.1>
- Oplatka, I. (2018). Understanding emotion in educational and service organisations through semi-structured interviews: Some conceptual and practical insights. *The Qualitative Report*, 23(6), 1347–1363. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2018.3259>
- Overseas Community Affairs Council. (2021). *About Overseas Community Affairs*.
<https://www.ocac.gov.tw/OCAC/Eng/Pages/Detail.aspx?nodeid=3512&pid=512633>
- Packard, M. D. (2017). Where did interpretivism go in the theory of entrepreneurship? *Journal of Business Venturing*, 32(5), 536–549.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2017.05.004>
- Parker, P. S. (2005). Visions of Leadership in Traditional (White Masculine) and (White) Feminine Leadership Approaches: A Review and Critique. In *Race, Gender, and Leadership* (pp. 27–43). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410611253-7>
- Pellegrini, E. K., & Scandura, T. A. (2006). Leader–member exchange (LMX), paternalism and delegation in the Turkish business culture: An empirical investigation. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 37(2), 264–279.
- Pellegrini, E. K., & Scandura, T. A. (2008). Paternalistic leadership: A review and agenda for future research. *Journal of Management*, 34(3), 566–593.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206308316063>
- Poston, D. L., & Wong, J. H. (2016). The Chinese diaspora: The current distribution of the overseas Chinese population. *Chinese Journal of Sociology*, 2(3), 348–373.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2057150X16655077>
- Redding, S. G. (1990). *The spirit of Chinese capitalism*. Walter de Gruyter.
- Reed, J. (2007). A brief tour of the history and principles of AI. In *Appreciative inquiry: Research for change* (pp. 21–43). SAGE Publications, Inc.
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412983464.n2>
- Reuters. (2022, October 27). 10 ways China has changed under Xi Jinping. *China News*.
<https://www.voanews.com/a/ways-china-has-changed-under-xi-jinping/6807561.html>
- Ritchie, N. A. (2023). *Archaeology and history of the Chinese in southern New Zealand during the nineteenth century: A study of acculturation, adaptation and change* (1st ed.). Sydney University Press. <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/stable/jj.8763127.12>
- Rowe, D. (2022). What’s in the new New Zealand history curriculum? *The Spinoff*.
<https://thespinoff.co.nz/society/18-03-2022/whats-in-the-new-new-zealand-history-curriculum>
- Saunders, M. N. K., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2016). *Research methods for business students* (7th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Schermerhorn, J. R., Jr., & Bond, M. H. (1991). Upward and downward influence tactics in managerial networks: A comparative study of Hong Kong Chinese and Americans. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 8(2), 147–158.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01732448>
- Schmidt, S. M., & Yeh, R. H. (1992). The structure of leader influence: A cross-national comparison. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 23(2), 251–262.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022192232005>
- Schwandt, T. A. (1994). Constructivist, interpretivist approaches to human inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 118–137). Sage.

- Schwartz, S. H. (2012). Refining the theory of basic individual values. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 103(4), 663–688. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029393>
- Schyns, B., & Schilling, J. (2011). Implicit leadership theories: Think leader, think effective? *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 20(2), 141–150. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492610375989>
- Shaffer, M. A., Joplin, J. R. W., Bell, M. P., Lau, T., & Oguz, C. (2000). Gender discrimination and job-related outcomes: A cross-cultural comparison of working women in the United States and China. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 57(4), 395–427. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.1999.1748>
- Silva, A., & Zhao, I. (2024, November 15). Asian Australians including Penny Wong say their heritage has been a barrier to their success. *ABC News*. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-11-16/asian-australians-breaking-bamboo-ceiling-penny-wong/104600724>
- Simon-Kumar, R. (2014). Neoliberalism and the new race politics of migration policy: Changing profiles of the desirable migrant in New Zealand. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 41(7), 1172–1191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2014.936838>
- Skouteris, H., Ananda-Rajah, M., Blewitt, C., & Ayton, D. (2024). ‘No one can actually see us in positions of power’: the intersectionality between gender and culture for women in leadership. *BMJ Leader*, 8(1), 63–66. <https://doi.org/10.1136/leader-2023-000794>
- Smith, P. B. (2006). When Elephants Fight, the Grass Gets Trampled: The GLOBE and Hofstede Projects. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 37(6), 915–921. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8400235>
- Smith, S. H. (1894). *Chinese characteristics*. Fleming H. Revell.
- So, A. Y. (2011). “One country, two systems” and Hong Kong-China national integration: A crisis-transformation perspective. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 41(1), 99–116. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2011.530039>
- Spoonley, P., & Bedford, R. (2012). *Welcome to our world? Immigration and the reshaping of New Zealand*. Dunmore Publishing.
- Stats NZ. (2024, May 29). *2023 Census population counts (by ethnic group, age, and Māori descent) and dwelling counts*. <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/2023-census-population-counts-by-ethnic-group-age-and-maori-descent-and-dwelling-counts/>
- Stats NZ. (n.d.). *Chinese ethnic group*. <https://tools.summaries.stats.govt.nz/ethnic-group/chinese>
- Suh, J. (2020). The Confucian doctrine of the Mean, the optimality principle, and social harmony. *Society and Economy*, 42(1), 59–73. <https://doi.org/10.1556/204.2020.00004>
- Tan, L. (2015). *Study reveals come-and-go migrants*. *New Zealand Herald*. https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/study-reveals-come-and-go-migrants/2ZNNWP46TMEL3CMRT3V6HVJQ5I/?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Tang, H. (2024). Cultural influences on leadership styles: A comparative analysis of Chinese and Western approaches. *Journal of Applied Economics and Policy Studies*, 15, 6–10.
- Tang, Q. (2019). Breaking the bamboo ceiling and reframing success: Perspectives from professional Chinese immigrant women on work, life and leadership. In C. C. Chao & L. Ha (Eds.), *Asian women leadership: A cross-national and cross-sector comparison* (pp. 192–203). Routledge.
- Taylor, S. (2022). Trait theories of leaders and leadership. In Carroll, B., Ford, J., & Taylor, S. (Eds.), *Leadership: Contemporary critical perspectives* (3rd edition.) (PP. 35-53). SAGE.

- Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission. (n.d.). *Board Appointment and Induction Guidelines: Planning appointments*.
<https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/guidance/guide-board-appointment-and-induction-guidelines/planning-appointments>
- Teiwes, F. C. (2019). Mao Zedong in power (1948–1976). In W. A. Joseph (Ed.), *Politics in China: An introduction* (2nd ed., pp. 72–118). Oxford University Press.
- Wang, B. (2014). *Becoming cosmopolitan: Roots, emotions and everyday diversity among new Chinese migrants in New Zealand* [eBook]. Perlego.
- Wang, B. (2019). Chinese migration to New Zealand: Desiring place and desirable migrants. In *New Chinese migrants in New Zealand* (1st ed., pp. 47–81). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351255714-3>
- Wang, B., & Collins, F. (2020). Temporally distributed aspirations: New Chinese migrants to New Zealand and the figuring of migration futures. *Sociology*, 54(3), 573–590.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038519895750>
- Wang, L., James, K. T., Denyer, D., & Bailey, C. (2013). Western views and Chinese whispers: Re-thinking global leadership competency in multi-national corporations. *Leadership*, 10(4), 471–495. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1471787513508888>
- Wang, Q. (2022). Reform of the English component in the Gaokao. *International Higher Education*, (110), 19–20. <https://ejournals.bc.edu/index.php/ihe/article/view/14985>
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358144444>
- Wang, X. (2023). China-Africa trade and investment cooperation. In *China's aid, trade and investment to Africa* (1st ed., pp. 141–162). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/b23123-5>
- Westfall, C. (2021, September 14). Battling discrimination and the bamboo ceiling: The bias facing Asian American managers. *Forbes*.
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/chriswestfall/2021/09/14/discrimination-and-bamboo-ceiling-the-unconscious-bias-facing-asian-american-managers/>
- Whetten, D. A. (1989). What constitutes a theoretical contribution? *Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 490–495. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258554>
- Whitney, D. K., & Trosten-Bloom, A. (2010). *The power of appreciative inquiry: A practical guide to positive change* (2nd ed.). Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Worm, V. (2010). Leadership and Management in China. – Philosophies, Theories and Practices. *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies*, 28(1), 131–133.
<https://doi.org/10.22439/cjas.v28i1.2850>
- Wu, J. (2024, March 11). The global Chinese diaspora today: Overview and mission trends. *Chinasource*. <https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/articles/the-global-chinese-diaspora-today/>
- Xia, F. (2020). A comparative study of Aristotle's doctrine of the Mean and Confucius' doctrine of Zhong Yong. *International Communication of Chinese Culture*, 7(3), 349–377. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40636-020-00194-x>
- Yao, C., Thorn, K., Duan, Z., & Taskin, N. (2015). Workplace stress in a foreign environment: Chinese migrants in New Zealand. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*, 34(7), 608–621. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-08-2014-0065>
- Yee, S. J. (1974). *The Chinese in the Pacific*. South Pacific Social Sciences Association.
- Yeung, D. T. C. (2012). My Second Life: A Survey of Chinese Immigrants In New Zealand. *Journal of Diversity Management*, 7(1), 47–56.
<https://doi.org/10.19030/jdm.v7i1.6935>
- Young, M. L. (1973). *The Auckland Chinese: A community in transition*. (Master's thesis). University of Auckland.

- Yu, K. C., Cheng, W. W., & Chen, W. Z. (1999). *Human resource management*. Dalian University of Science and Technology.
- Yugendran, M. (2024, February). The challenges skilled migrants face finding work in New Zealand. *RNZ*. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/indonz/509337/the-challenges-skilled-migrants-face-finding-work-in-new-zealand>
- Yustantio, J. (2018). Is a bamboo ceiling stifling the rise of potential leaders? *UNSW Business Think*. <https://www.businessthink.unsw.edu.au/articles/Is-a-bamboo-ceiling-stifling-the-rise-of-potential-leaders>
- Zhang, T., & Schwartz, B. (1997). Confucius and the Cultural Revolution: A study in collective memory. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 11(2), 189–212. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20019932>
- Zhao, K., Hsieh, W., Faulkner, N., & Smith, L. (2025). A systematic meta-review of organizational diversity and inclusion interventions and their associated outcomes. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*, 44(9), 53–71. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-02-2024-0085>
- Zhao, L. L. (2023). Sloppy targeting of Chinese voters in the 2020 New Zealand general election: an exploration of National and Labour’s targeting strategies. *Political Science*, 75(2), 122–139. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00323187.2023.2273519>

Appendices

Appendix A

Appendix A1: Actual and projected Chinese overseas population by region, 1955-2040.

Year	Number					Total
	Asia	America	Europe	Oceania	Africa	
<i>Actual</i>						
1955	11,074,000	266,000	14,000	69,000	33,000	11,456,000
1960	10,904,000	301,000	14,000	74,000	40,000	11,333,000
1970	14,147,000	711,000	112,000	69,000	59,000	15,098,000
1980	17,100,000	1,558,000	525,000	105,000	75,000	19,363,000
1990	21,588,000	2,663,000	589,000	356,000	99,000	25,295,000
2000	27,363,000	5,959,000	955,000	631,000	137,000	35,045,000
2009	29,747,000	7,287,000	1,259,000	932,000	238,000	39,463,000
<i>Projected</i>						
2020	33,561,919	9,744,454	1,876,684	1,637,137	528,489	45,626,036
2030	36,826,230	12,185,439	2,551,228	2,525,179	976,209	52,060,227
2040	40,408,036	15,237,891	3,468,225	3,894,927	1,803,223	59,401,767

Source: Figures for 1955–2009, selected years, are based on statistics from the 2009 *Statistical Yearbook of the Overseas Compatriot Affairs Commission*, Overseas Compatriot Affairs Commission, Taiwan, 2010. Figures prior to 2000 have been adjusted by subtracting the population of Hong Kong and Macau from Asia and the total. The population of Hong Kong and the population of Macau were not reported after 1997 and 1999 respectively in the original data.

Source: Li & Li (2013).

Appendix A2: Actual and projected Chinese overseas population by region, 1955-2040.

Year	Percent					Total
	Asia	America	Europe	Oceania	Africa	
<i>Actual</i>						
1955	96.7	2.3	0.1	0.6	0.3	100.0
1960	96.2	2.7	0.1	0.7	0.4	100.0
1970	93.7	4.7	0.7	0.5	0.4	100.0
1980	88.3	8.0	2.7	0.5	0.4	100.0
1990	85.3	10.5	2.3	1.4	0.4	100.0
2000	78.1	17.0	2.7	1.8	0.4	100.0
2009	75.4	18.5	3.2	2.4	0.6	100.0
<i>Projected</i>						
2020	73.6	21.4	4.1	3.6	1.2	100.0
2030	70.7	23.4	4.9	4.9	1.9	100.0
2040	68.0	25.7	5.8	6.6	3.0	100.0

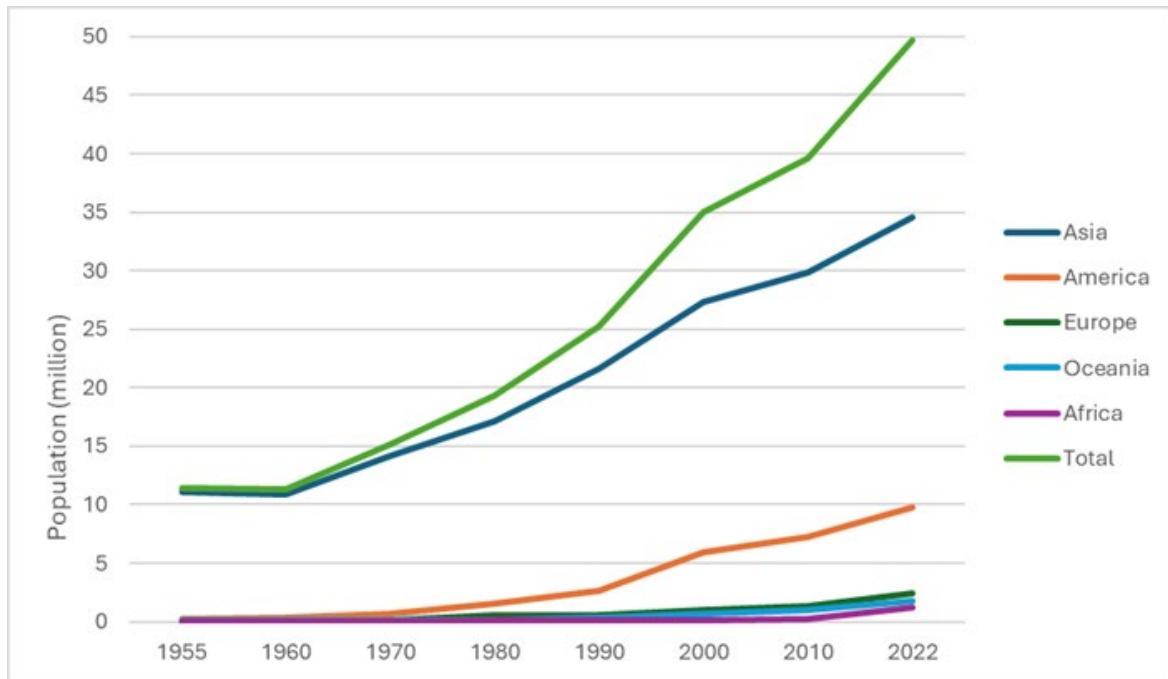
Source: Li & Li (2013).

Appendix A3: Overseas Chinese population in 2010 and 2022.

Continent	Population in 2010	In 2022
Asia	29.82 million	34.62 million
America	7.26 million	9.77 million
Europe	1.32 million	2.38 million
Oceania	0.95 million	1.77 million
Africa	0.24 million	1.18 million
Global	39.57 million	49.73 million

Source: Wu (2024).

Appendix A4: The population of Overseas Chinese in different continents, 1955-2022 (million).



Year	1955	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2022
Asia	11.07	10.9	14.15	17.1	21.59	27.36	29.82	34.62
America	0.26	0.3	0.71	1.56	2.66	5.96	7.26	9.77
Europe	0.01	0.01	0.11	0.53	0.59	0.96	1.32	2.38
Oceania	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.1	0.36	0.63	0.95	1.77
Africa	0.03	0.04	0.06	0.08	0.1	0.14	0.24	1.18
Total	11.44	11.32	15.1	19.37	25.3	35.05	39.59	49.72

Source: Li & Li (2013); Wu (2024).

Appendix A5: Ethnic groups in New Zealand in 2006, 2013, 2018, and 2023.

Ethnicity	2006		2013		2018		2023	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
European	2,609,589	67.6	2,969,391	74	3,297,864	70.2	3,383,742	67.8
New Zealand European	2,381,076	61.7	2,727,009	68	3,013,440	64.1	3,099,858	62.1
British & Irish	100,668	2.6	105,765	2.6	121,986	2.6		
South African								
European	21,609	0.6	28,656	0.7	37,155	0.8	48,930	0.98
European (not further defined)	21,855	0.6	26,472	0.7	34,632	0.7	21,834	0.44
Dutch	28,644	0.7	28,503	0.7	29,820	0.6	30,948	0.62
Australian	26,355	0.7	22,467	0.6	29,349	0.6	30,591	0.61
Māori	565,329	14.6	598,605	14.9	775,836	16.5	887,493	17.8
Asian	354,552	9.2	471,708	11.8	707,598	15.1	861,576	17.3
Chinese	139,731	3.6	163,101	4.1	247,770	5.3	259,755	5.2
Indian	97,443	2.5	143,520	3.6	239,193	5.1	255,261	5.1
Southeast Asian	43,962	1.1	77,733	1.9	124,932	2.7		
Other Asian	59,739	1.5	68,004	1.7	90,627	1.9		
Pasifikas	265,974	6.9	295,941	7.4	381,642	8.1	442,632	8.9
Samoan	131,103	3.4	144,138	3.6	182,721	3.9	213,069	4.3
Tongan	50,481	1.3	60,333	1.5	82,389	1.8	97,824	2
Cook Islands								
Māori	56,895	1.5	61,077	1.5	80,532	1.7	94,176	1.9
Niuean	22,476	0.6	23,883	0.6	30,867	0.7	34,944	0.7
Middle Eastern/Latin American/African	34,743	0.9	46,953	1.2	70,332	1.5	92,760	1.9
Other	430,881	11.2	67,752	1.7	58,053	1.2	56,133	1.1
Total people stated	3,860,163		4,011,399		4,699,755		4,993,923	

Source: Stats NZ. (2024).

Appendix A6: Percentage of population by regional council area of usual residence, Chinese and Total New Zealand population ethnic groups, 2023 Census.

Category	Chinese (%)	Total NZ population (%)
Northland Region	0.6	3.9
Auckland Region	69.7	33.2
Waikato Region	4.8	10
Bay of Plenty Region	1.7	6.7
Gisborne Region	0.1	1
Hawke's Bay Region	0.7	3.5
Taranaki Region	0.5	2.5
Manawatū-Whanganui Region	1.7	5
Wellington Region	8.1	10.4
Tasman Region	0.2	1.2
Nelson Region	0.2	1.1
Marlborough Region	0.2	1
West Coast Region	0.1	0.7
Canterbury Region	9	13
Otago Region	2	4.8
Southland Region	0.4	2
Area Outside Region	0	0

Source: Stats NZ. (n.d.).

Appendix A7: Percentage of population by highest qualification, Chinese and Total New Zealand population ethnic groups, 2023 Census.

Highest qualifications	Chinese (%)	Total NZ population (%)
No qualification	10.2	15.7
Level 1 certificate	2.9	10.3
Level 2 certificate	3.2	9.8
Level 3 certificate	10.7	12.7
Level 4 certificate	2.6	8.8
Level 5 diploma	3.3	5.1
Level 6 diploma	4.1	4.7
Bachelor degree and Level 7 qualification	25.5	15.5
Post-graduate and honours degrees	8	6.2
Masters degree	9.9	4.4
Doctorate degree	1.4	1
Overseas secondary school qualification	18.2	5.8

Source: Stats NZ. (n.d.).

Appendix A8: Total personal income for the Chinese and Asian ethnic groups, 2018 Census.

Personal income	Chinese (%)	Asian (%)	NZ population (%)
Loss	1.1	0.8	0.5
Zero income	16.2	13.2	6.8
\$1–5,000	8.5	7.7	5.6
\$5,001–10,000	6.9	6.1	4.7
\$10,001–15,000	7.7	6.8	6.9
\$15,001–20,000	7.9	6.9	9.9
\$20,001–25,000	5.3	5.3	8.1
\$25,001–30,000	4.4	4.8	5.6
\$30,001–35,000	4.4	5.2	4.9
\$35,001–40,000	4.9	6.4	5.6
\$40,001–50,000	8.9	11.3	9.7
\$50,001–60,000	6.6	8.2	8.2
\$60,001–70,000	4.8	5.6	6.2
\$70,001–100,000	7.1	7.3	9.6
\$100,001–150,000	3.4	3.1	4.7
\$150,001 or more	1.7	1.4	2.9

Source: Stats NZ. (n.d.).

Appendix A9: Median personal income (\$) of population, by age, Chinese and Total New Zealand population ethnic groups, 2013–2023 Censuses.

Category	2013 (Chinese)	2018 (Chinese)	2023 (Chinese)	2013 (Total NZ population)	2018 (Total NZ population)	2023 (Total NZ population)
15-29 years	6400	9100	13900	12600	17200	25000
30-64 years	25800	34200	51000	39600	45300	57900
65 years and over	13800	16300	19800	20900	22500	26600

Source: Stats NZ. (n.d.).

Appendix A10: Ranks and Scores of Societal Cultural Dimensions in China.

Results of GLOBE Societal Value Survey

<i>Cultural Dimension</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Rank^a</i>	<i>Absolute^b Difference</i>	<i>Band^c</i>	<i>Highest Score</i>	<i>Lowest Score</i>
Performance Orientation						
“As Is”	4.45	13	1.22	A	4.94	3.20
“Should Be”	5.67	50		C	6.58	4.92
Future Orientation						
“As Is”	3.75	34	0.98	C	5.07	2.88
“Should Be”	4.73	60		C	6.20	4.33
Assertiveness						
“As Is”	3.76	51	1.68	B	4.89	3.38
“Should Be”	5.44	2		A	5.56	2.66
Institutional Collectivism						
“As Is”	4.77	7	0.21	A	5.22	3.25
“Should Be”	4.56	9		B	5.65	3.83
In-Group Collectivism						
“As Is”	5.80	9	0.71	A	6.36	3.53
“Should Be”	5.09	58		C	6.52	4.94
Gender Egalitarianism						
“As Is”	3.05	48	0.63	B	4.08	2.50
“Should Be”	3.68	58		C	5.17	3.18
Uncertainty Avoidance						
“As Is”	4.94	10	0.34	A	5.37	2.88
“Should Be”	5.28	9		A	5.61	3.16
Power Distance						
“As Is”	5.04	41	1.94	B	5.80	3.89
“Should Be”	3.10	12		B	3.65	2.04
Humane Orientation						
“As Is”	4.36	17	0.96	B	5.23	3.18
“Should Be”	5.32	39		C	6.09	4.49

^aThe rank order for China relative to the 61 societies. ^bAbsolute difference between the “As Is” and “Should Be” scores. ^cLetters A to D represent statistically different clusters of countries (Bands) with A > B > C > D (cf. Hanges, Dickson, & Sipe, 2004).

Source: Fu et al. (2007).

Appendix A11: Ranks and Scores of Societal Cultural Dimensions in Hong Kong.

Results of the Nine GLOBE Cultural Dimensions at the Societal Level

<i>Culture Dimension</i>	<i>“As Is”</i>		<i>“Should Be”</i>	
	<i>HongKong Mean score^a</i>	<i>Rank^b</i>	<i>HongKong Mean score^a</i>	<i>Rank^b</i>
Assertiveness	4.67	5	4.81	5
Future Orientation	4.03	21	5.50	33
Gender Egalitarianism	3.47	28	4.33	41
Humane Orientation	3.90	41	5.32	38
In-Group Collectivism	5.32	33	5.11	57
Institutional Collectivism	4.13	34	4.43	41
Performance Orientation	4.80	3	5.64	52
Power Distance	4.96	43	3.24	5
Uncertainty Avoidance	4.32	21	4.63	38

^a7-point Likert scale. ^bThe rank order is relative to the 61 GLOBE countries.

Source: Chow (2007).

Appendix A12: Ranks and Scores of Societal Cultural Dimensions in Singapore.

Ranks and Scores of Societal Cultural Dimensions In Singapore

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>“As Is”</i>		<i>“Should Be”</i>	
	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Score</i>
Future Orientation	1	5.07	22	5.51
Performance Orientation	2	4.90	48	5.72
Uncertainty Avoidance	3	5.31	46	4.22
Institutional Collectivism	4	4.90	37	4.55
Gender Egalitarianism	11	3.70	36	4.51
In-Group Collectivism	17	5.64	40	5.50
Assertiveness	28	4.17	12	4.41
Power Distance	42	4.99	14	3.04
Human Orientation	55	3.49	3	5.79

Note. Dimensions are listed from highest to lowest “As Is” rank (out of 61 GLOBE countries).

Source: Li, et al. (2007).

Appendix A12: Comparison of GLOBE Second-Order Leadership Dimensions

Leadership Dimension	China Score (Rank)	New Zealand Score (Rank)	Singapore Score (Rank)	Hong Kong Score (Rank)
Charismatic Leadership	5.56 (54)	5.87 (34)	5.95 (23)	5.68 (47)
Team-Oriented Leadership	5.57 (51)	5.44 (57)	5.76 (34)	5.58 (50)
Participative Leadership	5.04 (44)	5.50 (23)	5.30 (32)	4.86 (54)
Humane Leadership	5.19 (16)	4.78 (37)	5.24 (10)	4.89 (31)
Autonomous Leadership	4.07 (18)	3.77 (36)	3.87 (30)	4.38 (7)
Self-Protective Leadership	3.80 (14)	3.19 (45)	3.31 (40)	3.67 (18)

Source: Chow (2007); Li, et al. (2007); Fu et al. (2007); Jeffrey (2007).

Appendix B

Waikato Management School

Te Raupapa



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Project Title: An Appreciative Inquiry into the Executive Leaders with Chinese Heritage within Aotearoa New Zealand

Researcher: Yiling Liu

Research Supervisor: Prof Brad Jackson

You are invited to participate in a research study about the promotion of leaders with Chinese heritage. You have been selected based on your role as a leader in a New Zealand organisation, either as a board director or senior leader. The research study is being conducted by Yiling Liu for the purpose of her Master's thesis as part of the fulfillment of the Master of Management Studies at the Waikato Management School, University of Waikato, New Zealand.

Research Objective:

The purpose of the research is to explore the dynamics surrounding the advancement of executives with Chinese heritage in the New Zealand business environment. The study tries to grasp the intricate interplay between cultural heritage, leadership styles, and career development for persons of Chinese heritage in top executive positions by drawing on an interpretive perspective. The research also underlines the underrepresentation of leaders with Chinese heritage in significant roles, despite the country's commitment to building a diverse and inclusive working environment.

The main objective of this research is to give an in-depth understanding of the issues and opportunities experienced by executives with Chinese heritage in the New Zealand business setting. The study aims to provide insights into the pathways that lead to effective leadership for people of Chinese heritage by analysing the interplay between cultural background, leadership styles, and professional progression.

Research Questions:

The primary research question that drives this research is:

"How does Chinese heritage influence New Zealand executives' leadership thinking and practice?"

"What are the opportunities and constraints for advancing executive leadership in New Zealand with Chinese heritage?"

The Interview Questions:

The questions that will be asked to you in the interview could include but are not limited to the following questions. I may ask some follow-up questions in seeking clarity and more accurate information.

- Can you tell me how you came to your current role, and what you do in your role?
- Can you tell me a bit about your upbringing and how much culture has influenced your general values and behavior?
- How would you describe your leadership style in terms of your personal values?
- How do you believe your cultural upbringing has shaped your approach to leadership in the corporate environment?
- Can you share an example of when Chinese culture may have influenced a leadership decision you made?
- Have you faced any specific challenges in your leadership role because of your cultural background?
- How effective, in your opinion, have your organisation's diversity and inclusion initiatives been in promoting leadership diversity?
- In your opinion, what could and should be done by organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand to encourage more executive leaders with Chinese heritage?

Procedure

If you decide to participate, you will be invited to take part in an interview approximately 45-60 minutes long. The interview sessions will be recorded via Zoom or a similar platform to help the researcher generate a transcript, therefore ensuring every critical detail is noted and increasing the accuracy of the research. In-person interviews will be recorded digitally. The consent for recording will be obtained before the interview. You have the right to refuse recording.

Participation and Withdrawal

Participation in the research is voluntary and there is no obligation for you to take part in this study. There is no cost associated with participation in this study either. If you decide to participate and change your mind later, you have the right to drop out at any stage during the interview. You can also withdraw from the study at any time up to four weeks after the interview or decline to answer any questions at any stage of the interview.

You will be required to sign a consent form or record your verbal consent before being interviewed.

Confidentiality

No information that can identify participating individuals will be used in the thesis or any academic articles, conference presentations, or reports emerging from the data collected or analysed for the research. The identities of all participants will be kept confidential at all times. Each participant will be assigned an alpha-numeric code or a pseudonym to protect the confidentiality of their identities. Such codes or pseudonyms will be used at every stage of the analysis and utmost care will be taken to make sure no one other than the researcher or her supervisors is aware of the actual identities of the participants.

Your institute will also be kept confidential to prevent any chance of the information being traced back to you. All files will be kept in researcher's password and firewall protected system. The transcripts of the interviews will be shared with you, and you will have the right to modify and delete any information you wish. All the data will be destroyed five years from the point of collection.

Declaration to the Participants

If you decide to take part in the study as a participant, you will have the right to:

- Refuse to answer any particular question during the interview.
- Withdraw from the study at any time up to four weeks after the interview.
- Ask any further questions about the study that occur to you during your participation.
- Access a transcription of your interview and ask for modification/removal of any information.
- Access a summary of the findings from the study when it is concluded.

Further information

If you require further information, you can contact the researcher or her supervisors or the University of Waikato at any time.

Researcher's contact information

Yiling Liu

Phone: 0212612371

Email: yiling.liu@waikato.ac.nz

Supervisors' names and contact information.

Professor Brad Jackson – brad.jackson@waikato.ac.nz

Appendix C

Waikato Management School

Te Raupapa



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

***An Appreciative Inquiry into the Executive Leaders with Chinese Heritage within
Aotearoa New Zealand***

Consent Form for Participants

I have read the **Information Sheet for Participants** for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study up to four weeks after the interview day, or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out on the **Information Sheet**.

- I agree for this interview to be **video, and audio** recorded if conducted **virtually**
- I agree for this interview to be **audio** recorded if conducted **in person**
- I **do not** wish this interview to be digitally recorded in any form
- I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the **Participant Information Sheet** form.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's contact information

Yiling Liu
Phone: +64-212612371
Email: yiling.liu@waikato.ac.nz

Supervisors' names and contact information

Professor Brad Jackson – brad.jackson@waikato.ac.nz

Appendix D

Waikato Management School
Te Raupapa

**Template:**

Use clear and simple language. Avoid technical terms wherever possible.

*Please allow **at least two weeks** for your application to be reviewed by the WMS Ethics Committee*

You must gain ethics approval prior to the commencement of data collection for your research project

See [How to fill out the form](#) for guidance.

1. IDENTIFY THE PROJECT.

1. **Title of Project:** An Appreciative Inquiry into the Executive Leaders with Chinese Heritage within Aotearoa New Zealand
2. **Researcher(s) name and contact information:** Yiling Liu yl670@students.waikato.ac.nz
3. **Supervisor's name and contact information:** Prof Brad Jackson brad.jackson@waikato.ac.nz
4. **Anticipated date to begin data collection:** 10th September 2024

2. DESCRIBE THE RESEARCH.

1. **Briefly outline what the project is about including your research goals and anticipated benefits. Include links with a research programme, if relevant.**

Research goals:

The purpose of the research is to explore the dynamics surrounding the advancement of executives with Chinese heritage in the New Zealand business environment. The study tries to grasp the intricate interplay between cultural heritage, leadership practices, and career development for persons of Chinese heritage in top executive positions by drawing on an interpretive perspective. The research also underlines the underrepresentation of leaders with Chinese heritage in significant roles, despite the country's commitment to building a diverse and inclusive working environment.

The main objective of this research is to give an in-depth understanding of the issues and opportunities experienced by executives with Chinese heritage in the New Zealand business setting. The study aims to provide insights into the pathways that lead to effective leadership for people of Chinese heritage by analysing the interplay between cultural background, leadership styles, and professional progression.

Research questions:

The primary research question that drives this research is:

"How does Chinese heritage influence New Zealand executives' leadership thinking and practice?"

"What are the opportunities and constraints for advancing executive leadership in New Zealand with Chinese heritage?"

Anticipated benefits:

The expected research findings in the study of enhancing leaders with Chinese heritage in New Zealand may shed light on a variety of critical issues important to establishing a diverse and inclusive business

environment. From a theoretical perspective, the study might reveal the important influence of cultural heritage on leadership styles and effectiveness, revealing the intricate interplay between cultural influences and leadership practises. In addition, the findings may highlight the necessity of recognising and integrating multiple cultural viewpoints within the larger leadership framework, consequently contributing to the creation of more comprehensive leadership theories that take cultural backgrounds into account.

Practically, the expected findings might involve discovering similar events and experiences that have led to the success of leaders with Chinese heritage in New Zealand, as well as understanding the opportunities that leaders with Chinese heritage have experienced in their professional journeys. These insights can provide beneficial guidance for future leaders, allowing them to harness their cultural background and experiences to establish effective leadership strategies that correspond with the needs of the modern corporate world.

Furthermore, the extent to which executives see their cultural heritage as significant in developing their leadership styles may highlight the need to embrace diversity in senior leadership roles. This acknowledgement may reinforce the significance of inclusion and cultural responsiveness within organisational leadership, producing an atmosphere that supports the integration of varied perspectives and experiences. Moreover, the research findings may provide guidance for implementing organisational guidelines and procedures that support the career advancement and professional development of leaders from diverse cultural backgrounds, fostering a more equitable and inclusive workplace, and providing a supportive environment for all employees. Lastly, the study outcome could benefit the younger generation who experience similar Chinese cultural influences. It can encourage them in pursuing greater career advancement and build a sense of pride in their cultural uniqueness. Personally, this would encourage me to continue learning and striving for better, as I see professional interview participants as role models for students like me.

2. Briefly outline your method.

I will conduct semi-structured interviews with a group of leaders with Chinese heritage who are working in large organisations or listed on the NZX50. The semi-structured interview is well suited to delving into the lived experiences, insights, and beliefs of leaders with Chinese heritage, providing a greater understanding of their pathways to leadership and the possible impact of their cultural upbringing on their leadership effectiveness. Following the collection of qualitative data, the coding procedure will follow for organising and analysing the material. The preliminary data will be organised into themes based on the backgrounds of participants. Following that, it will be further grouped into superordinate categories in the following step of analysis. The third step will concentrate on creating comparisons and connecting the data.

3. Describe plans to give participants information about the research goals.

An initial message (as attached) will be sent once I select the participants. As stated in section 3.2, a participation sheet will be provided once potential interviewees have demonstrated interest in this study. This participation sheet (as attached) includes the goal of the research as well as the research questions. Participants may also contact the researcher or supervisor for further clarification.

4. Identify the expected outputs of this research (e.g., reports, publications, presentations), including who is likely to see or hear the reports or presentations on this research

The research data will be used to produce a Master's thesis HRMGT593 as partial fulfilment of my degree in Master of Management Studies. After the final submission, I will look for opportunities to present at conferences across the globe. The work may also be published in journals as a stepping stone in assisting me in my application for a PhD scholarship.

My thesis supervisor Prof Brad Jackson is the person who will have the most access to interview data, draft submission and final submission throughout different stages of preparation. Associate Prof Peter Sun will be the second point of contact where I seek advice on completing the research. In addition, other people such as academics, examiners, and peers, will also have the chance to see the outcome of my research in various contexts including presentations at conferences, or published journals.

5. Identify the physical location(s) for the research, the group or community to which your potential participants belong, and any private data or documents you will seek to access. Describe how you have access to the site, participants and data/documents. Identify how you obtain(ed) permission from relevant authorities/gatekeepers if appropriate and any conditions associated with access.

The researcher is based in Hamilton, New Zealand, during the thesis completion period. No private data or documents will be sought to complete this thesis apart from published journal articles, books, or statistics.

3. OBTAIN PARTICIPANTS' INFORMED CONSENT, WITHOUT COERCION.

1. Describe how you will select participants (e.g., special criteria or characteristics) and how many will be involved.

To gain rich data that are consist of wide range of perspectives, fifteen leaders with Chinese heritage who either have the board of direct position or in the executive management team will be interviewed. Because the research focuses on the promotion of leaders with Chinese heritage, the potential interviewees who may experience a greater or lesser influence by Chinese culture. This means that despite their different appearances, educational backgrounds, and upbringings, which could influence their exposure to a Chinese cultural environment.

I will primarily look for board members and executive leadership team members in organisations listed on the NZX50. Some potential interview participants can be identified based on their names and appearances on organisations website. In addition, there have been three candidates who have indicated an interest in participating in this interview due to personal connections when the research outline has been communicated verbally.

3.2 Describe how you will invite them to participate.

Once I identify my potential interviewees, I will first use LinkedIn to contact participants to express my intension and give an outline of the research. Occasionally, if I cannot identify them on LinkedIn, I will search the company website for their work email to contact them. Some participants may be recommended by word of mouth, and then they will be contacted via the email address or mobile number provided.

In the initial emails/messages (as attached), I will introduce myself and the research I am conducting, include my research objectives and purposes, and indicate a timeframe for them to respond if they wish to participate, as well as my contact information for further inquiries via phone call or email. If they express interest in participating in the research, in the second message, I will attach a participation sheet including more details about the interview and research questions to give them a better understanding of the project. Information regarding ethical considerations, such as the date they are allowed to opt out of the project, will also be clearly communicated so they feel safe in participating in the research. On the interview day, the consent form (as attached) will be presented to the participant prior to the interview, and I will allow time for concerns or questions to be asked by them.

3.3 Show how you provide prospective participants with all information relevant to their decision to participate. Attach your information sheet, cover letter, or introduction script. See document on informed consent for recommended content. Information should include, but is not limited to:

- what you will ask them to do;
- how to refuse to answer any particular question, or withdraw any information they have provided at any time before completion of data collection;
- how and when to ask any further questions about the study or get more information.
- the form in which the findings will be disseminated and how participants can access a summary of the findings from the study when it is concluded.

The participants will be provided with an information sheet (as attached) outlining the purpose of the research study, what the participants would be required to do if they choose to participate in the study, steps to ensure protection of information and participants' confidentiality, and the rights that the participants will have if they wish to be a part of the study. All participants in the project will have access to a summary of findings and conclusions reached at the end of the project.

3.4 Describe how you get their consent. (Attach a consent form if you use one.)

The consent of the chosen participants will be sought via a consent form (as attached). A signed consent form will be a prerequisite before the start of the data collection process for in person interviews. The signed consent may be emailed to me before the interview begins for virtual interviews. Alternatively, their consent will be verbally recorded before the formal start of the interview.

3.5 Explain incentives and/or compulsion for participants to be involved in this study, including monetary payment, prizes, goods, services, or favours, either directly or indirectly.

There will be no incentives involved in this research. Their involvement is voluntary, and the participants can withdraw as indicated in the consent letter. Furthermore, participants will bear no cost if they choose to take part in the study.

4. MINIMISE DECEPTION.

1. If your research involves deception – this includes incomplete information to participants -- explain the rationale. Describe how and when you will provide full information or reveal the complete truth about the research including reasons for the deception.

This research will not conceal any information or true intentions of the study upon contacting the participants. All information provided will be truthful and accurate.

5. RESPECT PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

1. Explain how any publications and/or reports will have the participants' consent.

Participants will sign a consent form and have it verbally recorded before the data collection process starts. The participants will also be informed that the study results may be published in journals and presented at conferences. However, no participant will be identified in presentations, publications, or in the thesis itself.

2. Explain how you will protect participants' identities (or why you will not).

No information that can identify participating individuals will be used in the thesis or any academic articles, conference presentations, or reports emerging from the data collected or analysed for the research. The identities of all participants will be kept confidential at all times. Each participant will be assigned an alphabetic code to protect the confidentiality of their identities. Such codes or pseudonyms will be used at every stage of the analysis and utmost care will be taken to make sure no one other than the researcher or her supervisors is aware of the actual identities of the participants.

3. Describe who will have access to the information/data collected from participants. Explain how you will protect or secure confidential information.

All data, including recordings, transcripts, notes, and analyses, will be stored securely on password-protected computers or drives to protect and secure confidential information. Only the researcher and her supervisors will have access to the data/information collected from the participants.

6. MINIMISE RISK TO PARTICIPANTS.

'Risk' includes physical injury, economic injury (i.e. insurability, credibility), social risk (i.e. working relationships), psychological risk, pain, stress, emotional distress, fatigue, embarrassment, and cultural dissonance and exploitation.

1. Where participants risk change from participating in this research compared to their daily lives, identify that risk and explain how your procedures minimize the consequences.

This research explores the cultural influence on leaders with Chinese heritage. The interview will dive deep into their upbringing, educational background, and major events that impacted their career pathways. This information may be sensitive to participants and could trigger unpleasant memories. This research could be a significant event that allows them to think deeper about who they are and what they are made of. As I have explored further into my own identity, recognizing the unique Chinese cultural influence on me, I have become more aware of how much of my attitude and behavior are influenced by my upbringing, which brings emotional reflection. Due to differences in experiences among leaders with Chinese heritage, these emotional episodes could be positive or negative, posing some potential risk of emotional distress.

To mitigate this, the research focuses on bringing out the positive aspects of their experiences by using appreciative inquiry as my research technique. This allows me to focus on their positive experiences and reinforce that in their minds, helping them appreciate the positive aspects of their lives that have been influenced by their culture. Additionally, I will indicate at the beginning of the interview that they have the freedom not to provide information that is upsetting or that they do not wish to share. This further protects their mental health.

2. Describe any way you are associated with participants that might influence the ethical appropriateness of you conducting this research – either favourably (e.g., same language or culture) or unfavourably (e.g., dependent relationships such as employer/employee, supervisor/worker, lecturer/student). As appropriate, describe the steps you will take to protect the participants.

The main motivation for my research stems from my ethnic background and observations as a foreigner, which drive me to understand the experiences of people with similar cultural influences. This means that I might speak the same language as the participants, depending on their experiences. A similar cultural background and language may be favorable factors that influence the candidates' willingness to participate. Regardless, professionalism will be maintained at all levels. I will aim to form a friendly and warm atmosphere when communicating with the interviewees to ensure they are comfortable

sharing their perspectives. However, no personal relationships or emotional biases will hinder the rigor of the project.

3. Describe any possible conflicts of interest and explain how you will protect participants' interests and maintain your objectivity.

There are no potential conflicts of interest that I can foresee.

7. EXERCISE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY.

1. Identify any areas in your research that are potentially sensitive, especially from participants' perspectives. Explain what you do to ensure your research procedures are sensitive (unlikely to be insensitive). Demonstrate familiarity with the culture as appropriate.

The research project addresses cultural sensitivity. It focuses on leaders with Chinese heritage in New Zealand, acknowledging the complexities arising from geopolitical issues involving China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Some leaders may prefer not to be identified as Chinese. Therefore, the title of the thesis uses "leaders with Chinese heritage," a broader term that includes individuals from diverse backgrounds who may not necessarily identify as ethnically Chinese. Additionally, in my thesis and presentations, I will use sensitive wording such as "leaders with Chinese heritage" rather than "Chinese leaders" to reduce potential tension.

2. If the participants as a group differ from the researcher in ways relevant to the research, describe your procedures to ensure the research is culturally safe and non offensive for the participants.

The participants in the interviews are likely to share a similar cultural heritage and have comparable Chinese cultural influences as myself. However, as mentioned in section 7.1, I will be very careful with the choice of words to ensure that this project does not escalate to a political level, focusing solely on cultural influence and personal perspectives.