ABSTRACT

Being a Chinese is a complex issue. The concept of Chineseness itself is not defined in a similar manner even by those who call themselves "Chinese". Chinese Singaporeans, though belonging to the same ethnic group, is hardly homogeneous. This study aims at understanding the cultural identity of the English-educated Chinese in Singapore.

The English-educated Chinese have often been perceived as Westernised and hence "rootless". However, this view may not paint the entire picture, as the ethnic consciousness of the English-educated Chinese is in a state of constant flux. This study analyses the cultural inclinations of the English-educated Chinese and attempts to re-construct their (perceived) Chinese ethnicity through the eyes of their own and those non-English-educated.

This thesis focuses on the following areas:

1. The factors contributing to the emergence of the English-educated Chinese in Singapore.
2. The construction of the cultural identity of the English-educated Chinese.
3. The factors leading to the changes in "positioning" of the English-educated Chinese in recent years.
4. The adoption of a new framework in viewing cultural identity at the time of globalisation.

Cultural identity is a continuous process of (re)invention and (re)negotiation. The findings of this thesis suggest that the perceived lack of Chineseness in some English-educated Chinese is apparent. However, this "positioning" is not static. With the emergence of China as a global superpower, it is likely that they will anchor themselves in a position which will best serve their interests.