

*NEGOTIATING ETHNIC
IDENTITY IN CANADA*
*The Case of the
“Satellite Children”*

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*Satellite children are children of ethnically Chinese immigrants to North America who have returned to their country of origin after immigration. Based on interview transcripts of 68 adolescent satellite children, an analysis on the negotiation of ethnic identity was performed using the NUD*IST software. The analysis showed multiple ways of ethnic identity negotiation, ranging from an essentialist approach to differentiation and to confusion. Existing approaches to theoretical conceptualization are critically examined, drawing implications for practice.*

Keywords: *Satellite Children; immigrant adolescents; ethnic identity; adolescent identity development*

This article aims at examining the concept of ethnic identity through the experience of a special group of young people—the satellite children in Canada. The “satellite children” or “satellite kids” phenomenon is a result of a relatively new pattern of migration. The term *satel-*

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lite kids was first used in the late 1980s to describe children whose parents are Chinese immigrants to North America, mainly from Hong Kong and Taiwan, who have returned to their country of origin after immigration. The typical pattern is for the father to return to the country of origin to pursue economic advantages while the mother and the children try to settle in the new country. There are also cases of the mother returning or both parents returning. The family is divided by immense geographical distance, although regular visits are not uncommon (Man, 1994). The couples who are thus separated are usually referred to as "astronauts." The term *satellite kids* is derived from a similar analogy. The term *parachute kids* has also been used interchangeably (Hamilton, 1993). Some people in the community have found these terms negative and prefer terms such as *lone-parent families*. Lone-parent families, however, represent a very different set of family situations (Schlesinger, 1995; Schlesinger & Schlesinger, 1994). The terms *astronaut*, *astronaut family*, and *satellite child* are, however, often used as self-reference and are widely understood ("Home Alone," 1993; Lam, 1994; van den Hemel, 1996a, 1996b). In many cases, the usage is mostly descriptive and is not necessarily associated with negative connotations. In this article, these terms will be used because they are more precise than terms like *lone-parent families*, which do not capture the specific immigration-related circumstances of these people.

The astronaut family arrangement can be seen as a strategy of family survival to balance the multiple agendas of political security, developmental and educational needs of the children, financial well-being, family cohesiveness, and quality of life. The typical Hong Kong astronaut family desires to safeguard political security and personal liberty after the 1997 handover of the former British colony to China, which is under communist rule. For most of the middle-class immigrants targeted by the immigration ministries of host countries like Canada, Australia, and the United States, the employment and financial opportunities in the new country are usually less lucrative than in the home country. To sustain a similar level of material comfort and to guarantee long-term financial security for the family, it makes sense for the major income earner—usually the father—to stay behind and keep generating a good income as the rest of the family tries to settle in the new country and struggle with the uncertainties (Man, 1994; Skeldon,

1994). Another major consideration commonly taken into account by astronaut families is the education of their children. Most of the astronaut parents believe that the universities in North America are of superior standards and quality, and they are prepared to invest personally, socially, and financially to enhance the chance of their children's academic success.

Satellite children, as a social group, occupy a precarious position both socially and developmentally. They are first of all immigrants who have to go through a challenging transition to establish themselves as full members of the host society. They are a visibly different group in terms of ethnicity. Their identity development, which is a central task in this stage of their life-course (Douvan, 1997; Erikson, 1950, 1968; Swanson, Spencer, & Petersen, 1998), is complicated by the major disruption of relocating to a geographically and culturally different environment (Rosenthal, Whittle, & Bell, 1989). This already demanding process is simultaneously accompanied by a drastic rearrangement of family structure, involving the absence of a parent or both parents and a redistribution of roles. In some cases, there is the added difficulty of racism both on the systemic and the personal level. An intensive examination of how they negotiate their identity in the context of these challenges and demands will enrich our understanding of ethnic and cultural identity development, especially within the context of immigration and settlement process. In addition, because ethnic identity is an integral aspect of adolescent identity development (Swanson et al., 1998), the analysis will also enhance our understanding of adolescents in the culturally diverse social environment of North America.

ETHNIC IDENTITY

A major conceptual issue in the understanding of ethnic identity development among adolescents is the tension between the mainstream developmental literature, which emphasizes individual identity, and the cross-cultural literature, which emphasizes group membership. Developmental research is interested in how the adolescent develops an individual identity vis-à-vis parents and peers (e.g., Bartle-Haring, 1997; Kerpelman, Pittman, & Lamke, 1997), whereas cross-cultural

studies usually follow a group comparison approach that takes adolescents as members of an ethnic group such as Mexican or Chinese (e.g., Chiu, Feldman, & Rosenthal, 1992; Fuligni, 1998).

Mainstream developmental studies of adolescence are heavily influenced by psychoanalytic formulations and focus on the development of ego identity and an autonomous self as the major developmental task of adolescence (Blos, 1979; Erikson, 1950, 1968; Freud, 1923/1961, 1933/1961; Hart & Yates, 1996; Josselson, 1980). Most theorists and researchers adopt a stage model, and many of them have offered normative formulations of what is healthy or desirable (e.g., Hart & Yates, 1996; Meeus, 1996). Identity formation is usually studied as a variable in correlation with other variables such as gender (e.g., Lacombe & Gay, 1998; Lytle, Bakken, & Romig, 1997), age (e.g., Kalakoski & Nurmi, 1998), sexual orientation (e.g., Waldner-Haugrud & Magruder, 1996), and other psychological variables such as cognitive development (e.g., Klaczynski, Fauth, & Swanger, 1998), moral development (e.g., Hart, Atkins, & Ford, 1998), and interpersonal relationships (e.g., Akers, Jones, & Coyl, 1998). Whereas the family is seen as the major context within which the adolescent develops, it is generally assumed that healthy identity development involves individuation, or separation and differentiation from the family, especially the parents (Erikson, 1968; Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975; Steinberg, 1990). Empirical studies are usually formulated and designed according to this perspective (e.g., Bartle-Haring, 1997; Grotevant & Cooper, 1985; Kerpelman et al., 1997). The emphasis on separation from the parents and family, individuation, and the development of an independent, autonomous self is a cultural ideal founded on a philosophy of individualism, which is a dominant discourse in the Western world, especially the United States (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1996). The cross-cultural relevance and validity of this perspective have been questioned (Lam, 1998).

In cross-cultural developmental studies, most theorists and researchers have adopted a categorical approach and study ethnically diverse populations in terms of broadly defined cultural groups. In the United States, it is common practice to classify people into one of the five ethnocultural groups of African American or Black, Asian American, European American or Caucasian, Hispanic or Latino, and Native American. Many researchers have adopted similar classifications

without question (e.g., Martinez & Dukes, 1997; Rotheram-Borus, Lightfoot, Moraes, Dopkins, & LaCour, 1998). There is a tendency to emphasize ethnicity when the four groups other than the European or Caucasian group are studied, whereas the ethnicity and cultural peculiarities of the Caucasian group are usually not focused on (e.g., Phinney & Landin, 1998). This practice reinforces a Eurocentric assumption, implying that ethnicity only belongs to non-European people and is understood in terms of their differences from the White or Caucasian group. The White group is then taken as the norm against which other groups are measured (McLoyd, 1991). If ethnicity is differentially emphasized when non-White people are studied and individuality is focused on when White people are studied, there is a risk that individual identity will become a White privilege. White people are represented as individuals with unique characteristics whereas non-White people are primarily understood as members of ethnic groups with common characteristics that they are assumed to share with others.

The fact that ethnic identity involves more than membership of an objectively defined ethnic group has been recognized by a number of authors. In sociology, Isajiw (1993) reviewed major approaches to ethnicity. He observed that definitions of ethnicity, other than the primordial approach that assumes that ethnicity is natural and established at birth, may include social construction and political positioning, situational or site-specific considerations, as well as subjective experience. In education, Shih (1998) describes the practice of categorizing people into discrete ethnic groups based on external observable criteria such as appearance and country of origin as phenotypical. Such definition of ethnicity runs the risk of encompassing people from diverse cultures that may have little in common. In psychology, Ho (1995) emphasizes the significance of the internalized culture of the individual, which is often the result of multiple cultural exposures. The role of the acculturation process in the development of ethnic identity has also been stressed by many psychologists (Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989; Ward, 1996).

Within the context of immigration, it is important to differentiate between closely connected concepts such as ethnic identity, citizenship, and cultural orientation. In nation states dominated by a majority ethnic group, ethnic identity and citizenship are often not differenti-

ated among that dominant group. White Caucasian people in North America often do not find it necessary to refer to their ethnic identity and may take labels such as Canadian and American as adequate descriptions of both ethnic identity and citizenship. Similarly, in China, most Chinese people belonging to the dominant Han group simply regard themselves as Chinese. In Hong Kong and Taiwan, where most of the population are ethnically Chinese, ethnic and national identities are not similarly integrated. Hong Kong was a British colony for more than a century until 1997, and many ethnically Chinese people there considered themselves British subjects (Skeldon, 1994, 1997). In Taiwan, there is a strong independence movement that advocates for an independent Taiwanese national identity that is separate from being ethnically Chinese (Rubinstein, 1993; Wachman, 1994). When these people of Chinese ethnic origin immigrate to Canada, they are conscious of the new citizenship that they are going to acquire. At the same time, they are aware of the ethnic and cultural differences they have compared to the dominant Caucasian group. How one defines oneself within a context of multiple processes of identification becomes a central task in the immigrant's settlement and integration into the host country.

Given the fact that identity development is of particular significance to adolescents, the current analysis focuses on a group of adolescent respondents who share many demographic similarities. Instead of assuming that their ethnic identity is determined by ethnic group membership or demographic characteristics, the study explores the multiple ways through which they negotiate their ethnic identity and cultural orientation. The analysis aims at enriching our conceptual understanding of the varied experience of ethnic identity among a particular group of immigrant youth and thus contributes toward the understanding of adolescent identity development.

METHOD

Despite the public and media attention satellite children have generated in Canada, their experience has not been studied systematically. As an initial exploratory study, this project has adopted a qualitative methodology to document their own experience of their particular life

circumstances. A within-group approach was used instead of an intergroup comparison approach to facilitate exploration of intragroup variation and to avoid generalized description and potential stereotyping (Phinney & Landin, 1998). A semistructured interview format was used to balance between the need for allowing respondents sufficient narrative space to articulate their experience and the need for information that is of interest to the researchers.

The target group of respondents was young people (age 16 to 24) who have immigrated to Canada from China, Taiwan, or Hong Kong, with one or both parents who have since returned to the country of origin. People who were on a student visa were excluded. Because there was no existing sampling frame, recruitment was initially done through professionals who worked with the community in the education and social service sectors, and personal contacts of research assistants and members of the research team. Participating respondents were also asked to refer people they knew who were in similar circumstances. A total of 93 respondents was recruited through this combined outreach and snowballing strategy. Most of the respondents (81%) had been in Canada for 7 years or less, with 20% of them for less than 1 year and 28% of them for 1 to 3 years.

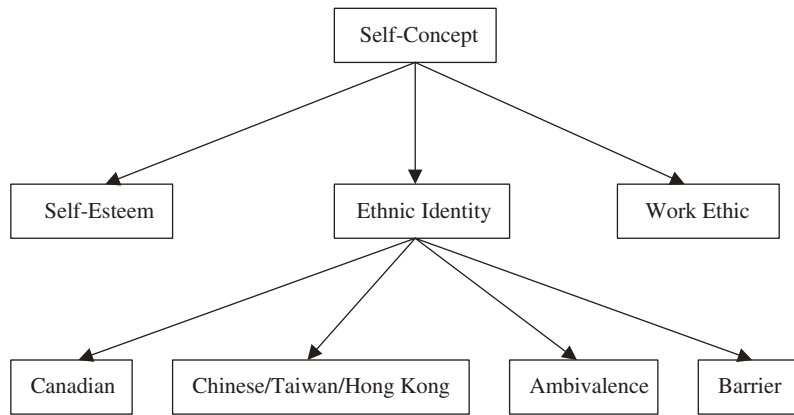
Interviews were conducted by a group of ethnically Chinese social workers and university students. Respondents were given a choice in the language used for the interview. As a result, 23% of all the interviews were conducted in English, 73% in Cantonese (most popular dialect in Hong Kong), and 4% in Mandarin (used mainly by people from China and Taiwan). Most interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. All the interviews were tape recorded. Due to technical (e.g., poor sound quality) and resource limitations, 68 tapes were fully transcribed. Interviews that had not been conducted in English were all translated to English during transcription to facilitate analysis. The 68 transcripts form the data for the current analysis and report. A discovery-oriented approach was adopted in the data analysis. A priori or open coding instead of priori or prestructured coding was performed to allow themes to emerge from the data analysis itself (Crabtree & Miller, 1992). The NUD*IST 4¹ software was used to facilitate coding and analysis. Different levels of coding were developed with reference to the procedures described by Grinnell (1997), Miles and Huberman (1994), Newman (1997), and Strauss (1987).

It is important to strengthen the trustworthiness of the data and the analysis of this study as a qualitative research project (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Trustworthiness was enhanced through a number of procedures to ensure credibility (e.g., team analysis to clarify and minimize personal bias of the researchers and utilization of NUD*IST 4), dependability (e.g., consistent training of interviewers and maintenance of audiotapes and transcripts), and transferability (e.g., thick description of data collection methods and analysis through regular team meetings and extensive note-taking for possible transfer of these findings to similar contexts).

RESULTS

The interviews generated a rich set of data offering many possibilities of analysis. The first level of open coding produced 15 codes: immigration decision-making process, migration goals, personal goals, self-concept, acculturation stressors, experience of racism, acculturative coping, family value, family role, living arrangement, finance, schooling, social support, future goals, and communication with the separated parent(s). The initial coding and analysis were summarized into eight themes and reported separately (Irving, Benjamin, & Tsang, 1999). The focus of this article is an analysis of how the respondents negotiate their identities with regard to ethnicity, citizenship, and culture. The current analysis was based on the respondent narrative units coded under "self-concept," which was one of the 15 codes created in the first level of coding. A second level code, "ethnic identity," was given to units wherein the respondent made any reference to any aspect of ethnic identity (see Figure 1). Sixty-six out of the 68 transcripts (97%) contained units that can be coded under "ethnic identity," and there were a total of 424 text-units (a text-unit is usually a speech turn during the interview). A third level of coding was used to facilitate thematization of the multiple ways in which the respondents articulate their ethnic identity.

The respondents share many demographic similarities such as age, ethnic background, immigrant status, and family structure, but their experience and articulation of their own identities are extremely var-

**FIGURE 1**

ied. Their responses range from certainty to ambivalence and confusion. They refer to multiple concepts including ethnic group membership, administrative-political definition of citizenship, and cultural orientation. They use criteria such as place of birth, physical appearance, and personal identification. The following analysis shows the diversity of their thinking and experience. We wish to emphasize that because the sample is nonprobabilistic and we are not making claims with regard to its representation of the population, the analysis is focused on the qualitative variation in the narratives provided by the respondents instead of statistical analysis. As well, we do not use a correlational analytic framework to examine how independent variables or factors affect the identity development and formation of the respondents. Instead, the analytic focus is on their experience of how different factors and processes intersect when they negotiate their identities.

ETHNIC IDENTITY AS NATURAL AND ESSENTIAL

To many people, ethnic identity is a given fact that is stable and secure. It is something that people are born with and is self-evident and

nonproblematic. This view of identity can be described as the naturalist or essentialist view. Isajiw (1993) describes this as the primordial approach. Some respondents have apparently adopted this approach for their own ethnic identity, and they present it in a matter-of-fact manner:

I am Chinese, we are Chinese. I cannot say we're Canadian, right? . . . Yep, I think I can't change. I was born with it. I was born being Chinese. . . . (R19)

Features such as place of birth and physical appearance are taken by some respondents as incontrovertible evidence of their identity:

I think no matter what, I am Chinese. I was born in China and I am different from them. They are white skin and I am yellow. (R74)

Because I am Chinese looking. (R58)

People will always know I am Chinese because of my appearance, right? (R37)

Among respondents who present their ethnic identity in a taken-for-granted manner, it is of interest to note that there is still diversity in their actual identification. A number of respondents, for example, identify themselves first and foremost as Taiwanese (R22, R63, R64, R67) instead of Chinese. There are also a number of respondents whose primary identification is Hong Kong instead of Chinese (R4, R33, R50). This alternative identification is connected with specific cultural communities that have a different developmental history from that of Mainland China. Hong Kong was under British colonial rule for more than 100 years up to 1997. Taiwan was colonized by the Dutch and the Japanese before the war and was returned to China in 1945. When the Chinese Communist Party took over Mainland China and established the People's Republic of China, the Nationalists moved their government to Taiwan. Hong Kong and Taiwan have, therefore, developed under unique circumstances and evolved into distinct communities with their own cultural systems and practices, even though they both share some Chinese cultural heritage.

ACCULTURATION AND DIFFERENTIATION

Some respondents do not take ethnic identity as something given at birth or something that is permanent and unchangeable. They are conscious of changes in their identity as part of their immigration process. Apart from the fact that they will eventually be adopting a new citizenship that is administratively defined by the government of the host country, they are exposed to the host culture and influenced by it. In this section, acculturation is analyzed mainly in terms of the respondents' identification with the host community and their adoption or internalization of aspects of the host culture.

Forty-three respondents referred to being Canadian in some way. Many respondents take a matter-of-fact approach and consider themselves Canadian because they have immigrated here and attained Canadian citizenship (e.g., R1, R12). Some of them are very definite about this new identity. For example, when asked if he had ever questioned his Canadian identity, one respondent (R47) said, "absolutely no." This new identification, however, is articulated more in terms of citizenship and belonging to a country than in terms of identification with a people of similar ethnic background. One respondent (R15) said, "When you come to Canada, Hong Kong is no longer your country, Canada is your country." Among the respondents who identified themselves as Canadian, some of them further qualified that identity when questioned. A respondent (R7), for example, said her national identity was Canadian. When she was asked later in the interview if she felt she was Canadian, she said, "Yes," but when she was then asked if she felt she was a citizen of Hong Kong or a Chinese, she said she was a Chinese. Similarly, another respondent (R28) said that she was a Canadian citizen when asked what her national identity was. When she was further asked whether she felt she was Canadian, she said, "No." Another respondent (R26) said she was "a Chinese living in Canada" when questioned.

These cases reflect an approach that separates between ethnic identity and citizenship. This strategy of identification is, at least in part, facilitated by the particular sociopolitical circumstances in the respondents' history. For example, children who were born and grew up in colonial Hong Kong have to relate to a British identity as part of their life experience. In most legal and formal documents they filled

out before the 1997 handover, "British" or "British Nationals Overseas (BNO)" were usually entered under "nationality." One of the respondents insisted that his identity is British and refused to represent himself as Canadian or otherwise (R88). The differentiation between ethnic identity and administrative-political identity or citizenship is something that many of the Hong Kong people are familiar with. As one respondent (R51) put it, "My national [ethnic] identity is that I am Chinese, but my nationality is British, and now I am a resident of Canada."

Such differentiation of identities is done with different degrees of clarity and certainty. There are respondents who feel that they are "in-between" (R16), "mixed" (R58), or "half Canadian and half Chinese" (R23). Thirty-two respondents reported some form of combination of Canadian and Chinese/Taiwan/Hong Kong identities. Some identify themselves as Canadian Chinese or Chinese Canadians. Among those who find themselves in the in-between position, there are varying levels of identification with the host country and culture and with the country and culture of origin. One respondent (R37) said, "I think I am a little bit from either side but I would rather be more on the Canadian side." Another respondent (R39), who identified himself as a "Hong Kong Canadian," said, "I feel comfortable with things Chinese. I give myself little chance to get in touch with Canadian culture."

TEMPORAL DIMENSION

Acculturation is a process that takes time. Most people expect that acculturation and integration into the host culture will increase over time. Many of the respondents feel that they would become more Canadian with longer time spent in the country:

I feel I am gradually becoming a Canadian. (R76)

I have only been here for 2 years. In fact, I am a Hong Kong person in Canada who tries to become one of the Canadians. (R83)

I am a Taiwanese right now. In the future I feel I am Canadian. (R1)

The acculturation process is, however, not unidimensional. Immigrant youth in Canada have multiple cultural exposures in a multicultural

environment. Apart from interacting with the host culture, respondents also engage with people from other ethnocultural backgrounds, including those coming from the same culture of origin, and can be acculturated into those cultural systems as well. The following account by one of the respondents (R60) demonstrates the multiple processes at work:

There was one time back in Grade 7 or Grade 8 that I kind of feel that I am Canadian and not Chinese but I can't really hide that way because I do not know about the Canadian culture as much as my other White friends do. . . . In Grade 9 summer school I met a group of friends that I am with now and ever since then. They are all Chinese, and we find that we are very attached to each other and to the Chinese culture. . . . I am not trying to hide the fact that I am so much Chinese and I know that I am not pure Canadian.

His identification with being Canadian and Chinese changed in his course of settlement in the new country. An important part of this process is his peer or reference group. There are also aspects of cultural practice that are not easy for a newcomer to adopt and assimilate. This particular respondent used hockey, baseball, and football as examples, telling us how difficult it is for him to be conversant among his White friends with these topics and to share their passion that he considered "obsessive."

Factors such as age and time in the new country do not have a uniform effect on people's ethnic identification. Other factors, including life circumstances, peer group, family influence, and cultural exposure, may work differentially to produce widely variable results. Unlike many of his peers who become more Canadian as they spend more time in Canada, the respondent quoted above has become more identified with his Chinese friends and the Chinese culture through growing up in Canada. The experience of the respondents highlights the fluidity of ethnic identity. The immigration and settlement process, as a significant life transition, raises fundamental questions with regard to one's identity and one's position in relation to one's personal history and current social relationships, and individuals respond to these questions differently.

ONGOING CONNECTION WITH THE CULTURE OF ORIGIN

A pattern that has emerged from the data is the significance of what can be described as the presence of an ethnospecific cultural establishment, which is a powerful force influencing the processes of immigrant settlement, acculturation, and identity development. In major Canadian cities such as Edmonton, Toronto, and Vancouver, a thriving ethnospecific economy is highly visible. This includes the numerous Chinese shopping malls featuring karaoke bars, cinemas, video rental shops, teahouses, music stores, gift shops, and so on. There is a strong popular subculture among the young immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan, which is supported by the local Chinese media structure with its own TV and radio stations, daily newspapers, and magazines. Toronto, for instance, has one major and three minor Chinese TV stations or programs, three major Chinese radio stations, and three Chinese daily newspapers. There is easy access to cultural products of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. The significance of such strong media presence cannot be underestimated. Many respondents articulate their connection with their culture of origin by referring to their involvement with this local cultural establishment.

The Chinese mall, in particular, becomes an icon of cultural affiliation. Whether one goes to Chinese malls often has become a sign of cultural identification that is widely understood and shared by the respondents. The respondent quoted above (R60), for example, illustrated his relationship with his Chinese friends by saying, "We all find that we are very much attached to each other and to the Chinese culture such as the singers, pop culture, and stuff like that, and going to the Chinese malls. . . . When I was younger I used to go to the English [mainstream] malls." Another respondent (R2) commented, "I feel [I] sort of know that I can go shopping and eating and there is a sense of belonging to the Chinese community." In contrast, a respondent (R95) who wants to be more immersed in the host community prefers going to mainstream malls for the following reason: "I do not enjoy this way of life. I think by coming to Canada, we should be living in a place where there are a lot of Westerners, and the surrounding should look more like a foreign country." These findings suggest that the preference for Chinese malls or mainstream malls is an effective expression of ethnic identification and cultural orientation, which is a theme rec-

ognized by urban studies researchers studying ethnic commercial establishments in Canada (e.g., Qadeer, 1998).

In addition to the presence of an ethnospecific cultural establishment, the utilization of electronic communication technology, such as e-mail, the Internet, the increasingly affordable mobile phone, and long-distance calls, contributed to the ease of personal and cultural connections with the country of origin. Many respondents refer to regular e-mail or phone contacts with their parents in the country of origin. More than 70% of the respondents have some form of contact with their parents at least once a week, and only two of the respondents reported contacts less frequent than once a month. This helps to explain the generally positive relationship maintained between the satellite children and their astronaut parents found in this study.

Although a satisfactory relationship is maintained with the absent parent, these satellite children find themselves in restructured families with major redistribution of roles. It is not uncommon for the parent who stays in Canada, usually the mother, to experience difficulty in the English language and feel inadequate in her transactions with mainstream institutions and systems. Older children are often expected to share parental functions. Although no systematic gender difference is observed in relation to ethnic identity, there is a clear gender difference in the redistribution of family roles. Whereas both sons and daughters are expected to take up some of the staying parent's responsibilities, daughters are more often assigned caregiving roles but are given relatively less freedom and privileges. In any case, this reconfigured family structure and role distribution might have weakened parental influence in the development of ethnic identity among these children and amplified the relative significance of peer influence, which is very prominent in the data.

CONFUSION, AMBIVALENCE, AND BARRIERS

The multicultural environment, while providing opportunity for simultaneous engagement with both the host culture and the culture of origin, may prove to be overwhelming and confusing for some respondents. Some of them stated directly that they were confused (e.g., R2, R18). Others showed their confusion in the process of the interview.

For example, one respondent (R19) who initially claimed to be Chinese, not Canadian, later said, "Actually, I'm really Chinese. I'm kind of in the middle. Not quite Canadian. Not quite Chinese." One of these respondents (R2) said, "I am in Canada but I don't feel like a Canadian. Sometimes you get confused because I don't know whether I will stay or I will go back after I finish university." The decision of staying or returning is a particularly relevant issue for satellite children, as many of their parents and family members do not plan to settle in Canada. A number of respondents indicated that they would return to their country of origin. Many astronaut families actually plan to have the mother bring the children to Canada and stay until the children finish university. At that point the mother and the children will return home and the family will be reunited. This uncertainty over the future, as seen in the above example, may contribute to the confusion over one's identity. Without a clear sense of whether they are staying permanently in Canada, it is difficult for these young people to invest psychologically in the new country, to establish a life, and to be integrated into the host community. As a result, many respondents have to struggle with the immense tension between acculturating into the host culture and continual attachment with the culture of origin.

Along with ambivalence and confusion over ethnic identity, many respondents indicated barriers to full engagement with the host society and culture. Language barrier is the most often cited. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents said that their English was either poor or below standard. Many of these respondents reported that the language problem had affected their school work or social life at some point. Cultural barriers such as difficulty in getting involved in sports and other cultural practices were also mentioned by some respondents. In 14 out of the 68 cases, the respondents referred to experiences of racism. One respondent (R16), who showed an exceptionally strong identification with being Canadian and denial of his Chinese identity, said,

I don't want to be Chinese. I am a Canadian. When I was young, the kids said bad things about my race. I don't like it. . . . I choose not to be [Chinese]. I don't like my parents. My classmate called me names. There were racist comments. . . . My father always asks me why I can't act like Chinese again. . . . I don't want to be Chinese. I had two fights

[with other students] because I don't want to be Chinese. . . . I tried to avoid Chinese, therefore, I set myself apart from them. I don't know any Chinese. . . . Every day I told myself I am not Chinese. . . . Most people at the school know that I don't want to be Chinese.

This apparently extreme example is a powerful illustration of the experience of racist victimization, negative identification, and shame. Other respondents reported that they were not accepted by Canadian society (R10), made fun of (R12), laughed at (R34), criticized, or bad-mouthed (R48). Whereas most respondents showed a mature understanding of racism and did not reciprocate the hostility or attack, a few have developed a similar racial bias toward people of other ethnic groups (e.g., R72). Some other respondents dealt with their discomfort or discontent with the host culture by positioning Canadian identity as a polar opposite to Chinese identity in an all-or-none fashion, and they refused to identify with being Canadian (R18, R19, R36). Apart from the barriers and racism, some respondents said that they had experienced pressure from the Chinese community and felt excluded because they were too Canadian. One respondent (R92), for example, felt that her Chinese peers regarded her as a "traitor," whereas her mainstream peers made stereotypic assumptions about her being "snobby."

Such challenges have led to many different responses among these young people. Apart from the rigid identification, differentiation, confusion, and ambivalence documented above, some respondents have developed an alternative approach to the issue of ethnic identity. This approach de-emphasized the significance of ethnic identity but focused instead on shared humanity. As one respondent (R34) put it,

I am just kind of thinking I am a human being just like everybody else. I don't really care about nationality that much. But I am kind of proud of myself because I am Chinese. . . . I always consider the whole earth as my home. Everywhere on earth you're just moving from one room to another room. So it is not a big deal.

This approach can be described as a form of universal humanism or diffusion of ethnic identity, which is helpful for some of the respondents when they negotiate their own identity in a situation highly

charged with personal meanings, emotional experiences, and major cultural and systemic challenges.

DISCUSSION

This analysis has identified a variety of strategies used by the respondents in negotiating identity while going through major life transitions. The use of qualitative research method and a within-group design has facilitated the documentation of individual differences and variations among the respondents. The findings challenge the conceptual approach that takes ethnic identity as natural and essential. They highlight the significance of the acculturation process and reveal the multiple strategies employed by these young people in negotiating their identity. The analysis of the temporal dimension illustrates how factors such as age and time in the new country do not have uniform effects on people's identity negotiation but instead intersect with many other processes to produce a variety of outcomes. The simultaneous engagement with both the host culture and the culture of origin has created a demanding and challenging situation for the respondents in a critical period of drastic changes. Although some respondents have developed effective strategies to deal with them, some are overwhelmed and confused. These findings challenge the dominant conceptual approach to ethnic and cultural differences and generate alternative formulations that have significant implications for professionals working with these young people.

Both in research and human service practice, the dominant approach is to conceptualize non-White people as members of distinct ethnic groups sharing some common characteristics. This study highlights the internal heterogeneity of a group of adolescents sharing many demographic similarities. The results call for a more individualized approach to understand their varied experience and to help or serve them. A related finding is the complexity of ethnic identity. Ethnic identity obviously cannot be conceptualized only in terms of group membership but involves other identifications related to citizenship, culture, and peer groups. Ethnicity has to be understood within the context of the "multiple worlds" of the adolescent (Cooper, Jackson, Azmitia, & Lopez, 1998; Phelan, Davidson, & Yu, 1991). Moreover, the

significance of ethnic identity is not uniform to everyone. Individuals assign different meanings and values to different aspects of their identity. One's identity, at least in the case of the satellite children, has to be negotiated on an ongoing basis. Processes of identification are fluid and may change over time and across social situations. Wexler's (1992) study of identity negotiation in schools came to similar conclusions.

Acculturation is usually studied with a focus on how the individual is socialized into the existing structures of cultural systems. For our respondents, it is experienced as a more dynamic process. These immigrant youths do not just move along a simple continuum between the culture of origin and the host culture but have to engage simultaneously with both. This phenomenon has been recognized by some acculturation researchers who conceptualize acculturation as a dual process of being socialized both into the host culture and the culture of origin (e.g., Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987; Buriel & De Ment, 1997). The current analysis has, however, noted an additional dimension of the acculturation process, that is the changing environmental and cultural contexts. The cultural systems to which the immigrant adolescent is being exposed are not static but are constantly changing. The growth of the Chinese communities in Canada and the associated development of economic and cultural institutions, for example, have created a changing cultural milieu for these satellite children. Such change facilitates forms of cultural identification that are not simply part of either the host culture or the culture of origin. In a way, there is a hybrid cultural environment created by the immigrant communities. The satellite children, in turn, are part of the growing ethnic population that created this new cultural milieu and contributed to its rapid development.

Acculturation theories focusing on the conditioning and shaping influences of culture on the adolescent must therefore be complemented by formulations recognizing the reciprocal influence and determination between the individual and the environment (Bandura, 1986). Swanson et al. (1998) have proposed an identity-focused, cultural, and ecological perspective that integrates the self-organizational processes of identity formation with the "multiple ecologies" that include ethnic and cultural dimensions. The current analysis supports these conceptual formulations by demonstrating the connection between the personal psychological processes of identification and ac-

culturation and the environmental factors such as the development of ethnic and cultural communities and establishments, peer influence, racism, and communication technology.

The respondents in the study reported different ways of engaging with their multiple ecologies, and their narratives showed multiple strategies of negotiating ethnic identity rather than fixed identities that they had already developed. Whereas some of these strategies might have worked well, there are people who are uncomfortable with their situation. Feelings of shame over one's ethnic background, bitterness, sense of isolation, anger, or the development of racially based prejudice are issues of concern for professionals working with young people through counseling or education. An understanding of the multiple pathways of identity development is central to the helping process.

With regard to practice, it is important that helping professionals in education and social service do not fall into the trap of cultural literacy. As characterized by Dyche and Zayas (1995), the cultural literacy approach assumes that all members of an ethnic group share similar cultural orientation and practice and professionals can become literate about this supposedly shared culture by acquiring objective knowledge about it. Many helping professionals believe that Chinese people, as a group, share "unique cultural values" (e.g., Fung, 1994; Mui, 1996). The literature is replete with general characterizations of aspects of Chinese culture such as hierarchical family structure (Li, 1988), filial piety and familism (Hong & Hong, 1991), self-control, and moderation (Ryan, 1985). Such generalized knowledge is often used to develop group-specific ways of professional practice and service provision for the Chinese (e.g., Christensen, 1987; Matsouka & Ryujin, 1991; Sue & Sue, 1991). In education, many teachers believe that students from the same ethnic group have more in common than students from different ethnic backgrounds. Usually out of good intention, these teachers put students from the same ethnic group together, thinking that the students would prefer it. This assumption of similarity, like the cultural literacy approach, overlooks individual differences and individual needs of the students (Shih, 1998).

Based on their critique of the cultural literacy approach, Dyche and Zayas (1995) recommend a more phenomenologically oriented approach that puts more attention on the individual's unique experience. Similarly, Ho (1995) suggests that counselors should focus more on

the internalized culture of the individual than ethnic group membership. A number of authors have also been recommended specific practice procedures (e.g., Green, 1995; Kadushin & Kadushin, 1997; Tsang & Bogo, 1997). It appears that an understanding of the complexity of the individual's experience of ethnicity and culture as well as the significance of environmental and contextual variables is central to effective cross-cultural work (Tsang & George, 1998). Practice models developed along this line usually emphasize the following: (a) awareness of the limitation of stereotypes, (b) the uniqueness of individual experience, (c) significance of the interaction process between the helping professional and the service user, and (d) openness to learning directly from the person coming from a different culture instead of assuming expert knowledge.

CONCLUSION

This study challenges existing conceptualizations of identity development by documenting the varied experiences of satellite children. Developmental theories have to recognize the significance of ethnicity as an integral part of adolescent identity and the complexity associated with it. Cross-cultural studies focusing on group comparison are also challenged to engage with the immense within-group diversity among a group of adolescents sharing many demographic similarities. An argument is made to move toward a theoretical conceptualization that takes into account individual experience as well as environmental and contextual realities. Such a conceptualization will be better connected with professional services for adolescents that are both culturally appropriate and personally relevant.

NOTE

1. The NUD*IST 4 (Non-numerical Unstructured Data by Indexing, Searching, and Theorizing) software was specifically developed for managing and analyzing qualitative data. It allows unitization of interview transcripts and supports a hierarchical coding structure. Multiple coding of any given unit is possible. Refinement of coded categories can be done easily. The flexibility of the software program allows the researcher to modify the coding structure in response to changing or emerging conceptualization. For more information, go to www.qsr.com.au.

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