HONG KONG SATELLITE CHILDREN IN CANADA: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THEIR EXPERIENCE

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Abstract: Astronaut families are those in which one or both parents spend much of their time in Hong Kong or Taiwan, leaving their satellite adolescent children to complete their education in Canada. Very little is known about the experiences of these children. For this exploratory study, interviews with 68 satellite children living in Toronto were examined using thematic analysis and the software program — NUD-IST. Three meta-themes emerged, concerned with ethnic identity development, the socially constructed character of immigrant adolescent experience, and the salient role of time in their adjustment to resettlement. Practice/policy implications are discussed.

Introduction

The Chinese communities in Vancouver and Toronto have grown with astonishing speed over the past decade. Much of this growth involved Cantonese-speaking immigrants from Hong Kong. During the period 1989–1993, Lam (1994) estimated that more than 100,000 such immigrants arrived in Canada. Their reasons for leaving the home country were diverse, including political uncertainty, the competitive school system, the high cost of living, and the overcrowding (Pe-Pua et al., 1996; Skeldon, 1994). On arrival, most of these immigrants quickly discovered that Canadian employment and labour policy made it nearly impossible to sustain the high incomes they were accustomed to in their home countries. The

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astronaut family form was among their different coping strategies (Hui, 1993; Man, 1994).

Astronaut families are those in which one or both parents spend much of their time in Hong Kong, leaving their adolescent satellite children to complete their education in Canada (Man, 1994). While little is known about this family form, for reasons that will shortly be apparent, satellite children are of special interest on personal (Irving, 1997), theoretical and practice/policy grounds.

Literature Review

Interest in astronaut families in general and satellite children in particular derive from broader concerns with family functioning in transition, immigration theory, and practice/policy. In each case, a brief review will indicate the multiple grounds upon which the study of satellite children is likely to be of special interest.

Family Functioning in Transition

Astronaut families resemble four family forms, all in transition. Studies of parent absence due to *divorce* indicated that key predictors of adolescent adjustment are parental adjustment, spousal conflict, and the quality of relations between adolescents and their non-custodial parent (Hoffman, 1995; Irving & Benjamin, 1995). Studies of parental absence due to *employment* suggested that prolonged separation can become a major stressor, especially around routine entry and exit (Groves & Horm-Winegerd, 1991; Riggs, 1990), and can negatively affect child development (Papini & Roggman, 1992; cf. Forsyth & Gramling, 1987). Studies of parental absence due to *immigration*, for example, among Caribbean families (Brice, 1982), indicated that such arrangements may result in parent-child disengagement (Baptiste, 1993). Finally, studies of *immigration among intact families* showed that geographic relocation can significantly disrupt parent-child relations (Cornille, 1993), increase the likelihood of high-risk adolescent behaviour (Brindis et al., 1995), and intensify intergenerational conflict (Chan I., 1993; Chan L., 1977; Lau, 1986), as adolescents find themselves caught between parental and peer cultures (Chao, 1990).

In contrast, the results of a rare Canadian study (Lam, 1994) revealed similarities and differences between astronaut families and the other family forms examined above. Based on 25 such families, it showed that: half-involved absent fathers, most were dissatisfied with lifestyle differences between Toronto and Hong Kong, all reported serious disruption of family life, including increased marital and/or parent-child conflict, most refused local social services based on a loss of face, and about half expected to return to Hong Kong eventually.

Thus, satellite adolescents and those in other family forms respond to parental absence with longing and loss. However, satellite adolescents stand apart in terms of their transmigrational status (Salaff & Wong, 1994), in effect having one foot in Canada and the other elsewhere. Thus, the dynamics of astronaut families are of special interest as they speak to a range of topics related to families in transition, including stress, coping and adjustment (McCubbin et al., 1996), immigration and acculturation (Berry, 1988), and ethnic family organisation (Benjamin, 1996).

Immigration Theory

There is general agreement that immigration is massively disorganising (Berry, 1988), both as regards acculturative stress (Berry et al., 1987) and the various contingencies associated with relocation (Health and Welfare Canada, 1988). In theoretical terms, this literature is problematic on twin grounds. First, the current emphasis on family functioning (Rosenthal & Feldman, 1990) or adult adjustment (Cole et al., 1992; Findley & Williams, 1991; Ward & Kennedy, 1992, 1994; Ward & Searle, 1991; Zheng & Berry, 1991) ignores the impact of immigration on adolescents (Landau-Stanton, 1985). While such studies exist (Bourne, 1975; Chiu et al., 1992; Yau & Smetana, 1996), they remain uncommon and have not received the attention we and others (Board on Children and Families, 1995) think they deserve. The study of satellite children would help fill this gap in the literature.

Second, contradictory formulations have been advanced as regards adolescent identity development. Developmental research operates at the individual level, emphasising identity development in relation to parents and peers (Bartle-Haring, 1997). In contrast, cross-cultural research operates at the group level, emphasising the salience of ethnic group membership (Fuligni, 1998). In both cases, identity development emerges as a precarious process, especially among immigrant youths exposed to different cultural environments (Rosenthal et al., 1989). Here, the transmigrational status of satellite children give them a special status that may help forge a link between these different approaches to adolescent identity development.

Practice/Policy

The final issue concerns practice/policy as regards ethnic families in general and immigrant families in particular. Only recently has the practice literature come to recognise that ethnic individuals and families may have distinctive problems,

and that distinctive intervention techniques may be needed if practitioners were to respond effectively (Chao, 1990; Brown & Root, 1990; Dana, 1993; Devore & Schlesinger, 1996; Ho, 1992; Saba *et al.*, 1990; Yamamoto, 1986). That insight supports the importance of understanding the dynamics of minority and immigrant families, and explains the increased number of such studies. Barber *et al.* (1994), for example, found that a neglectful parenting style helps explain the impulsive acting out seen previously in our review of the acculturation literature. Similarly, Chataway & Berry (1989) found that compared to their French or British counterparts, Hong Kong Chinese students in Canada exhibited decreased mental and physical health, increased stress, and poorer overall adjustment. In this context, astronaut families are of special interest insofar as their experience may speak to several issues at the same time, including immigration, transmigration, acculturation, parental absence, and stress and coping.

In the context of these various concerns about transition, theory and practice, the exploratory study to be discussed below sought to: (a) describe the coping strategies and social adjustment of satellite adolescents, (b) identify any other processes or factors that bear on their adjustment, (c) construct a profile of successful and dysfunctional satellite children, and (d) explore the implications of these findings for theory, research and practice.

Method

Sampling

Satellite adolescent is not an official designation. The initial problem was to locate satellite adolescents. To that end, we combined snowball sampling with two focus groups, the first consisting of eight professionals serving the Toronto Chinese community, the second consisting of nine satellite adolescents. These efforts yielded a total sample of 90 respondents. However, that was reduced to an effective total of 68 as a result of resource limitations and technical difficulties. In sociodemographic terms, these respondents were characterised as follows: female — 54%; 16–19 years of age — 76% (range: 16–24 years of age); originated in Hong Kong — 87%; in Canada: < 1 year — 20%, 1–3 years — 28%, 4–7 years — 32%, 8+ years — 19%; landed immigrants — 70%; returned to home country: father — 55%, mother — 3%, both parents — 42%; cared for by: father — 5%, mother — 52%, relatives — 11%, older siblings — 12%, self, — 20%.

Interviewing and Transcription

Respondents were interviewed on a face-to-face basis in their home. These interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, were audiotaped for later transcription, and were conducted in the respondents language of choice (English — 23%, Cantonese — 73%, Mandarin — 4%). To our surprise, the majority of respondents (85%) were rather laconic, giving only brief answers to questions, despite repeated promoting by the interviewer. The resulting audiotapes were then transcribed for analysis. Transcription involved the dual process of translation and transcription, such that each 60-minute interview required about four hours to transcribe.

Data Analysis

Examination of interview transcriptions relied on thematic analysis. Following Miles and Huberman (1994), this included selection of representative exemplars [identified by respondent number, (R28)] and, where appropriate, the use of proportions. Further, the identification of themes was augmented by use of the software package called NUD-IST.

Results

The results are organised around the eight themes that emerged from our analysis. In each case, description of the findings is followed by brief analysis, with integration reserved for the concluding discussion

1. Family Organization: The Home Country

Respondents were from middle class or upper-middle families. Fathers were either professionals (doctors, lawyers, engineers or university professors), business owners or corporate managers. Wives were either professionals (nurses, teachers or accountants) or assisted their spouses in the family-owned business. Most respondents were students who spent long hours studying.

Respondents invariably characterised their father as the head of the household, i.e. as the primary source of family income and prestige, and as the key decision-maker and problem-solver. His later absence in Canada led a number of respondents to conclude that their family was neither complete nor safe. As one respondent put it, "I think a house without a father is not a safe place" (R56).

While many respondents (65%) had had a good relationship with both parents, nearly half (42%) saw or spoke with them infrequently. For example, one

respondent said, "Ever since I was a kid, I went to school without seeing [my father in the morning]. And often I went to bed before he came home" (R59). Even when we were together, public talk about private matters was often absent; for private matters, we won't talk about any. Each of us will go to our own room and do our own thing. We don't have much to talk about. It has always been that way (R62). In a third of these cases (36%), such isolation included siblings. In some families, such social isolation included extended kin. As one respondent put it, "We don't have a very intimate relationship with relatives" (R37).

Analysis: These data are consistent with categorical treatments of Chinese families which invariably picture father as standing atop a hierarchical structure, with mother following behind (Benjamin, 1996; Bond, 1991; Pearson & Leung, 1995). Such structures are adaptive in context, functioning well in the home country, but exposing the family to additional acculturative stress following immigration (Berry, 1988). This would likely be especially true of mother, who is confronted with the need to make many decision but without the central authority to do so. In turn, such uncertainty may be experienced by the children as a sense of risk or vulnerability. That sense may be heightened still further if, as in many of these families, they feel that they cannot talk about these feelings to other family members. Thus, family structure can function as a resource or a liability in families faced with the crisis induced by relocation (Berry *et al.*, 1987), with adolescent reactions not unlike separation anxiety in younger children (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999).

2. Immigration

Respondents offered ten reasons for their parents', decision to immigrate to Canada: better place to live (11%), relatives in Canada (17%), and better educational opportunities (28%) as the predominant reason; 17% of respondents were too young to understand why their parents had made the decision to immigrate. Respondents shared these views, with a female respondent noting, for example, that "I liked [the idea of coming to Canada] a lot at that time because I visited Canada before and liked the environment here. Also, I have a lot of relatives here" (R91). Other reasons for immigration included: political uncertainty (9%), opportunity to overcome educational failure (6%), siblings living in Canada (4%), overcome financial problems (2%), avoiding the draft (in Taiwan — 2%), better future for the family (2%), and/or escaping routine (2%).

However, nearly half (48%) were not consulted about the immigration decision, and so had little time to prepare for relocation. Further, most had little or no knowledge of Canada or Canadian culture. Thus, anxiety about the future and

sadness about the friends and relatives they were leaving behind were commonplace: "I didn't want to go because I knew nothing about Canada. I had to give up everything too. This is one thing I cannot accept" (R17).

Analysis: Normative transitions (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983) are those for which people are prepared in general, but not in particular. Immigration is a case in point (Shuval, 1993). While this dynamic process can tax individual and family resources to the limit, it seems clear that some set of circumstances increase the likelihood of adjustment more than others. Preparation, forewarning and advanced knowledge tend to ease transition demands (Patterson, 1989). Apparently, such was not the case among many respondents, thus increasing transition demands and possibly prolonging adjustment time, especially among adolescents already struggling with demands of socialisation and identity formation (Fuligni, 1998).

3. Ethnic and National Identity

Being a satellite adolescent had specific consequences for respondents sense of self. Respondents were divided as regards national and ethnic identity. For some, their ethnic identity was unproblematic; rooted in biology, it was self-evident. Known in the literature as the primordial approach (Isajiw, 1993), one respondent put it simply, saying "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). Others distinguished between national and ethnic identity, variously describing themselves as citizens of Hong Kong (44%) , Taiwan (6%), or Canada (13%), or Chinese (13%), half and half (16%), or confused (6%). The dominant view was that, "I feel comfortable with things Chinese. I give myself little chance to get in touch with Canadian culture" (R39). In contrast, the minority view was that, "I just don't do a lot of Chinese stuff...I use the Chinese language like maybe 40% of the time at home. [Otherwise] I usually speak English" (R92). Other respondents were more mixed, one saying, "At home, they don't think I'm Chinese any more...I don't fit in so good. [My parents] told me so" (R27). Still others were frankly confused, one respondent noting that, "I think I am one of no identity" (R70).

Such confusion was exacerbated by their transmigrational status, which made it difficult for respondents to know who they were or whether in the future they would remain in Canada or return to Hong Kong. As one respondent put it, "Here, my black hair and my yellow skin already tells [White people] that I am Asian, so you can't escape it. You can say you are Canadian, but there is no choice. Ethnically, you look Chinese. You can say you are Canadian, but still

have that Chinese left in you...One minute I can say I am a Hong Kong citizen and the next minute I can say I'm Canadian. I have no idea [who I am] because of the dual citizenship" (R90). Others agreed, but suggested that such confusion would ease with time. In the words of one respondent, "I have only been here two years. In fact, I am a Hong Kong person in Canada who tries to become one of the Canadians" (R83). As for the future, respondents were again divided, 57% fairly certain they would return to the home country after completing their education, 26% equally certain they would remain in Canada, 16% uncertain, their future to be determined by the job market.

Analysis: These data has made clear that there is no single conceptual approach that adequately captures adolescents sense of identity. Unlike the personal development approach, respondents emphasised the salience of their ethnic identity, and easily distinguished between that and their national identity. Unlike the cross-cultural approach, there was considerable within-group variation, despite obvious sociodemographic similarity. Whereas some respondents identified completely with the Chinese culture, others preferred the Canadian culture. Thus, for these immigrant youths, identity development was a complex, dynamic and highly individualised process that is best understood in terms of the multiple worlds of the adolescent (Cooper *et al.*, 1998). It is a process that must be negotiated daily (Tsang *et al.*, in press; Wexler, 1992). We will return to these issues in later themes.

4. Family Arrangements: Host Country (Canada)

In coming to Canada, close relations between respondents and their parents changed for some but not others. A small group (9%) reported little change. As one respondent put it, "When I was in Hong Kong, I had a good relationship with my parents...[now, in Canada] my relationship with my parents and my brother and my relatives remains the same" (R63). A larger group (67%) reported positive changes, especially with mother (52%). As one respondent explained, "I think in Hong Kong we don't have time to do anything. But once you get separated our relationship gets better because we are going to take care of each other more and we really, really want to show our love to each other" (R2). Others agreed, adding that, "I become more friendly with my mother...One year ago I seldom saw my mother. Now I see her every day" (R84), or "[My relationship with my parents] has changed because we talk more.... I open myself a bit more. I make the effort to know my parents [better] because I realise how I miss them when I do not have them [here]" (R90). Such longing was reflected in weekly or more frequent contact by telephone, letter, facsimile and/or e-mail (51%) as well as

biannual visits (45%). Finally, a third group (23%) experienced deterioration, especially with father (15%). Feeling abandoned, one respondent said, "I treat my father as my enemy because he left us here. I made good friends with my mother because she knows and understands me" (R7). Others felt cut off, either because of time away, "I went back to Hong Kong every summer because my family is all there. And I kind of find out that I'm not part of them now because I stay away too long. They have been together for five years without me" (R27) or because of expense, "I think the relationship [with my mother] is worse than before. I only have a few words with my mom. Long distance calls are expensive" (R62).

Such variation in parent-child relations parallelled respondents ways of coping with parental absence. One group (20%) felt a sense of longing and homesickness. As one respondent put it, "We are very close. That is why I never get used to [my parents] not being here [after seven years]. There is one year that the Blue Jays won the world series. I was watching it and I suddenly felt so sad that I missed my parents and I really, really wanted to forget it, and I'm not studying, and I wanted to go back, so I called my parents and they helped me" (R22). For these respondents, forced independence was aversive: "The greatest challenge I face is that I have to be very independent. That's why I feel stressed and emotionally upset at times" (R38). The reverse was true of a second group who reported a loss of freedom. The resulting ambivalence is only too apparent in the following comment: "I wish my parents weren't here. But I enjoy my parents too" (R1). While another noted that, "I don't like that I can't do my stuff anymore. My mother keeps hollering at me, asking me questions. I could never go where I wanted. Now she knows what I'm doing" (R58). However, the majority fell somewhere between these extremes, having periodically to confront feelings of loneliness, loss, and homesickness, while enjoying a newfound sense of freedom and independence.

Finally, these responses varied by gender. Women were expected to provide direct service to parents. As one respondent noted, "Since my parents can't speak English properly, I spend some time with them, especially when they go shopping" (R10). They were also expected to help with household chores, a time-consuming process because their family's affluence had allowed the purchase of a big house. In the words of one respondent, "I was unhappy because I have to look after my [younger] brother and a big house..... Sometimes I am so depressed that I don't want to do anything, not even go to school" (R76). Men also complained, but for different reasons. For example, one respondent reported that, "I feel that since I am the eldest [child] of the three of us here, I have to take care of the house" (R13). Another complained of doing things formerly done by the handyman, "We

don't have a handyman here.... At first it was the little things, like doing more yard work and taking more of the stuff that leaks, shovelling snow, cutting grass ..." (R13).

Analysis: Adjusting to the demands of a new context is fraught with difficulty and commonly associated with transitional conflict (Landau-Stanton, 1985). This is apparent among respondents, some of whom complain about new responsibilities or the loss of independence or whose greater command of English accorded them more power than they are accustomed to having. But the emphasis in the literature on difficulties or challenges is belied by changes in context which benefit family relations, increase coherence and reduce stress (Mavreas & Bebbington, 1989). In a related vein, the increased communication and intimate talk in these families might lead one to conclude that many astronaut families were detached (Minuchin, 1974), and thus dysfunctional. Elsewhere, we have argued that it is unreasonable to assess ethnic minority family processes by the standards of the dominant culture (Irving *et al.*, 1999). Rather, evidence of limited or more expansive talk suggests that cultural norms are sensitive to context, with both styles of relating indicative of functional family processes under the circumstances.

5. Social Life

When not with parents or attending school, the respondent's social life was centred on their friends, either for leisure (23%) and/or for problem-solving and support (77%); 11% spent most of their free time alone. For most, however, it was their friends they talked to and shared their feelings with ("[When I feel unhappy] I talk to my friends" (R39)). However, these current involvements highlight the role of time in adapting to the Canadian context, and brought to mind their initial experiences of isolation and loneliness. In the words of one respondent, "When I first came to Canada, everything is different. Everything falls apart because I don't have friends and my parents just left me here. So it was a bit hard for the first two years" (R19). Another coped by maintaining contact with: "My friends in Hong Kong...[or] I talk to my girlfriend in Hong Kong on the phone" (R76). Current friendships were tied to school and/or church, among peers of the same sex and dialect (Cantonese). While many (41%) had non-Chinese acquaintances, close friendships were rare (3%). As one respondent put it, "I prefer to be with a group of close friends, but not being with a group of [non-Chinese] people whom I don't know. There is no point if we have nothing in common to talk about" (R62). In addition, a fair proportion (17%) indicated a strong preference for activities in groups rather than in pairs. This preference included the 30% of respondents who reported involvement with a romantic partner, with whom only 4% of respondents were sexually active.

Analysis: This is the second time we have encountered time as an underlying dimension. Developing personal, ethnic and national identities evolves through time, as does efforts to establish a friendship network. Neither are end states, but rather complex, ongoing processes. Moreover, that identity and friendship overlap should come as no surprise, since they are co-constructed, each contributing to the other (Rubin, 1985). Similarly, the fact that most of such relations are within-group is salient, at once reaffirming their mutual commitment to their ethnic identities as Chinese youths, while creating a barrier to acculturation, and thus perhaps slowing the related process of adjustment.

In a related vein, these data highlight the role of social support in protecting their identities, a finding consistent with the conservation of resources model of stress (Hobfall & Vaux, 1993). Among other things, the model holds that, people seek or receive assistance with life tasks through transfers of resources, often observable as supportive behaviour (Hobfall & Vaux, 1993: 688). Developing an ethnic identity and adjusting to the new demands of Canadian society are life tasks with which friends can provide crucial support. While this preference for friends over parents is common to adolescents (Bibby & Posterski, 1992), it may be especially relevant in Chinese families whose norms proscribe private talk in public with parents, particularly for men.

Finally, such proscriptions apparently extend to romantic and/or sexual involvement. These limitations appear to reflect the intersection of three related processes: their transmigrational status, which de-emphasises long-term relationships; their single-minded concern with academic achievement ("I keep all my focus on school" [R83]); and a fairly straitlaced culture and religion that regards as sinful anything to do with romance and sex outside of marriage (Tsang, 1986)".

6. Education

Respondents were of two minds as regards their school experience. On the one hand, all agreed that English language mastery was critical to academic achievement, with 68% reporting that their English was poor or below standard. This rendered school as their single greatest challenge in Canada ("To me, the biggest challenge is my study" [R45]), with 44% reporting that they found school work very difficult, primarily because of language problems. One respondent spoke for many when she said, "When we first arrived, I only knew a bit of English and I couldn't communicate and I couldn't write. Basically, I went to school and just sat there alone and did nothing" (R23).

On the other hand, respondents had had a very demanding curriculum in Hong Kong, especially in the maths and sciences. Consequently, in substantive terms, 30% found it less demanding than the curriculum in the home country. It was not surprising then, that the majority reported superior academic achievement, with 78% reporting grades in the A or B range. Support from teachers and other staff (93%) was also a factor, although language limited interaction. In the words of one respondent, "Not much interaction with [my teachers] but they are very helpful. They want to help you. They are very nice" (R90). Limited interaction may also have arisen because of their different expectations as regards class participation. As one respondent explained, "Here, teachers want us to raise [our] hands. But in Hong Kong, we are not asked to speak. We only need to finish the assignments and memorise what we are taught" (R35). Another added that, "[Hong Kong students] will never raise their hands and ask the teacher questions. Teachers also misunderstand because of a lack of communication. Therefore in high school there is some kind of discrimination, not by race, but by their ability to communicate. If you can speak good English, and [are] willing to ask questions, teachers will like you.... If you like to discuss among your [peer] group in class, teachers won't like it" (R83). Indeed, for many respondents, the availability of other Cantonese-speaking youths meant that, "When I go to school here, I don't have to speak much English. Sometimes if I don't bump into friends, I will go a whole day without uttering a single word" (R84). Conversely, superior English mastery, while it afforded connection with teachers and some peers, undermined ongoing relations with family: "I know sometimes...I speak too much English with [my friends]...so when I go back home to Hong Kong, [when] I speak to them in Chinese, I can't speak emotionally with them. So the funny thing is that...I can talk in English much better than I can in Cantonese" (R90).

Still others noted instances of discrimination, either by teachers (6%) or non-Chinese classmates (25%). As to teachers, one respondent observed that, "Once I was late. My teacher scolded me and asked me not to talk in class. The other day a White student was late. He just asked her to take a seat" (R28). While another noted that, "My English teachers asks us many questions in class, though she know our English is not up to standard. She gives us lower marks. She scolds us if we talk in class" (R85). As to classmates, one respondent said that, "My classmates called me names. There were many racist comments" (R18).There was also some evidence of reverse discrimination, one respondent commenting that, I only hang around Chinese or CBCs [Canadian-born Chinese] ...I don't like White people...Indians smell, Black guys are too big. White people, I don't have much to say to them (R77). In contrast, another respondent explained that, "Hong Kong immigrants cling onto their cliques. They socialise among themselves. This

causes them to look at Canadians through coloured lenses. They are extremely unfriendly. Also, before they come here, they have a perception of discrimination in Canada. Thus, they think of themselves as second-class citizens. It's hard to take away their prejudice. All I see is Chinese discriminating against Canadians, but not vice versa" (R83).

Analysis: Language is the key medium of socialisation and acculturation (Shuval, 1993). Among satellite adolescents, language was a double-edged sword, promoting the development of integration, cohesion and identification among Chinese youths, while blocking efforts at acculturation, including contact with teachers and school staff who functioned as key agents of socialisation. Indeed, in practice, English language mastery provided the focus of both differential reward and, in some cases, active, if subtle, discrimination. In this sense, acculturation involved a multidimensional process of being socialised both in the home and host cultures (Buriel & De Ment, 1997) within the contexts of changing environmental and cultural contexts (Tsang *et al.*, in press). Thus, satellite youths move uneasily between different communities, their Cantonese-speaking friends and families, and their English-speaking peers, teachers and school staff, having, in the process, to continuously negotiate identities that were fluid and changeable (Swanson *et al.*, 1998).

7. Community

If English mastery operated as a barrier *within* the Chinese community, then poor English operated as a barrier *between* satellite adolescents and the dominant culture: "It was just bad. I had difficulty communicating with people, like mainstream people. I could just get along with the Chinese people" (R19). Another respondent explained that, "[The lack of contact with mainstream culture is] mainly because of the cultural differences...although we use English to communicate, what we think and the direction of our thoughts are completely different. That's why we have only superficial conversations" (R62). For a minority of respondents, that superficiality changed with growing experience, one respondent noting that, "Canadian people just laugh at you because of our pronunciation. Basically, they didn't understand any words that I say, so there is a big barrier. Those people that just laughed at me [in the beginning] are friends now" (R23).

While English was problematic for many, Cantonese was not, promoting and cementing their strong identification (80%) with the larger Chinese community. That identification took three forms: functional activities, such as shopping in Chinese malls, recreation and entertainment, especially karaoke; volunteer activities

(20%); and membership in a Chinese Christian church (41.1%). The upshot of these activities was that most respondents felt part of the local Chinese community because, "Everything around me is so Chinese" (R42).

Analysis: Here, language again emerges as a medium both of communication and cultural exchange, and thus as a basis for both socialisation and acculturation. Growing English mastery afforded satellite adolescents a window on the dominant culture and an opportunity to transform initial antagonism into friendship. Even so, English was an imperfect vehicle for exchange, for apparently many notions in Cantonese either translate poorly or have no English equivalents, forcing superficiality despite sincere efforts to communicate. For some, the unintentional result was increased acculturative stress (Berry, 1988; Berry *et al.*, 1987).

Further, these data call our attention to the salience of what might be described as the group-specific cultural substructure. Among respondents, this consisted of various aspects of popular culture, including Chinese television and radio stations, newspapers and magazines, and an increasing number of Chinese malls. In the six Chinese enclaves or Chinatowns spread across the Greater Toronto Area, this cultural substructure made for a thriving ethnic economy (Benjamin, 1996), while Chinese malls served as a combination meeting place, community and shopping centre, recreation and entertainment site, and cultural icon. Attendance at such malls spoke of respondents sense of community, and was an effective expression of their ethnic identity and cultural orientation (Qadeer, 1998). Such attendance also helps explain the ambivalent national identity we saw earlier.

8. Adjustment

Well-adjusted satellite children were those who: originated in well-functioning families in which feelings of closeness and evidence of support remained stable or increased following immigration; gradually achieved English mastery; felt part of the Chinese community; and, had a network of supportive friends and/or romantic partners. By these criteria, 92% of respondents were judged well-adjusted. Even so, time to adjustment, to feeling comfortable in Canada, varied widely, from one to five months (51%), 6–12 months (23%), to between one and seven years (12%); 14% felt unable to estimate how long it had taken.

In becoming comfortable, respondents confronted an array of obstacles, including ethnic and national identity confusion, changes in family roles and responsibilities, shifts in parent-child relations, homesickness, parental absence, reconstruction of a friendship network, connection to the Chinese community, and the barriers of language, academic work, and racism. These obstacles highlight the significant achievement of satellite children in adjusting to the post-settlement

demands of Canadian life, while recognising the uncertainty that inheres in their transmigrational status. Such ambivalence was not lost on respondents, 80% of whom judged their time in Canada positively, some with qualifications ("[I was] very disappointed on the first year. Very, very disappointed about the people around me, everything...It is better [now] because I am involved in much more activities" (R19)), others without ("I think the weather is more relaxed...the education is not pushing me too hard and I am making lots of friends. So it has been a very good time" (R23)). Still others (15%) evaluated their stay negatively, as time wasted ("I think I have wasted five years in Canada because I have learnt very few things" (R70)) or as time without family ("I think I have more bad experience here. There is nothing worth [being] happy about. Mainly because I miss my family in Hong Kong a lot; I am unhappy here. If it was not for this reason, I might have been happy" (R62)). Finally, 5% reported a mixed judgement ("I think it is a turning point. I can't say it's good or bad. Being here [in Canada] has some good and bad. I am in a different country and it might affect my future as a result" (R95)).

Analysis: Embedded in the notion of adjustment is the idea of mobilising resources to meet new and changing demands (Hobfall & Vaux, 1993; Patterson, 1989). Adjustment, then, not only evolves through time, but is better thought of as a process rather than an endpoint. Such was certainly the case among these respondents, many of whom reported bitter experiences; several have yet to feel comfortable in Canada. Even among those who have adjusted to life in Canada, some considerable time was sometimes required before that came to pass. On the one hand, these data call our attention to the central role of parental absence in making a difficult settlement process that much more so. On the other hand, they highlight the social character of the adjustment process, with the quality of the connection to family, friends and the ethnic community salient to positive evaluations.

Discussion

Social and political changes in Hong Kong in the 1990s gave rise to a Chinese diaspora. Among the immigrant Chinese who came to Canada were astronaut families and their satellite children. This unusual solution to the problems of resettlement and income maintenance has received limited attention in the literature, while it is of considerable interest on theoretical and practical grounds. Exploration of open-ended interviews with 68 satellite adolescents yielded eight central themes. In turn, overview of these data suggest three meta-themes associated with the process of adolescent adjustment in resettlement. The first

meta-theme concerns *ethnic identity development*. Here, the data challenge simple, categorical approaches, highlighting internal heterogeneity, experiential complexity, and the central role of acculturation (Ward, 1996; Ward & Kennedy, 1992, 1994). In adjusting to the demands of resettlement, satellite adolescents must re-learn what it means to be Chinese, in a process that is often confusing, fluid and changeable. The second meta-theme concerns *social construction*. Together with family, friends and others in the Chinese community, satellite adolescents co-construct a sense of self, place, and future. In doing so, they, together, must overcome a variety of barriers, most notably, language, racism, and the uncertainty that inheres in their transmigrational status (Salaff & Wong, 1994; Shih, 1998); many respondents were reluctant to form deep friendships in anticipation of the inevitable return to the home country. Such social and cultural interdependence appears salient; in its absence, the barriers become insuperable, and the adjustment process unremittingly hard and unrewarding. The final meta-theme, which binds the first two together, is the underlying dimension of *time*. Repeatedly, we have seen that adjustment in several senses evolves through time, including the construction of personal, ethnic and national identities, the acquisition of English-language mastery, the re-formation of friendship networks, and the forging of connections to group-specific cultural substructures (Tsang & George, 1998).

Finally, this research holds a number of implications for practice and policy aimed at making the process of adjustment less onerous. These changes would include: (1) assistance to parents in their efforts to secure employment, including language training for adults, and assistance in job search skills; social support for mothers who, in the absence of their spouses, may find adjustment to Canada particularly difficult; (2) increased opportunities for satellite adolescent to connect as quickly as possible with non-Asians, perhaps by means of volunteer placement, community service, and/or connection to non-Asian same-sex buddies; (3) higher-level connections between Chinese and non-Chinese service agencies and institutions; (4) school-based life skills training for immigrant adolescents; opportunities for them to work through their ambivalent feelings about their transmigratory status; and, (5) greater dissemination of studies such as this to agencies and institutions currently serving these youths and their families, such as Chinese service agencies, schools and/or government services (especially immigration), both in Canada and in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Further, while these changes will be helpful to families contemplating immigration, they will be equally useful to satellite adolescents who, upon completing their education in Canada, return to Hong Kong or Taiwan. This study would lead us to expect that many of these adolescents will need a good deal of help in re-integrating into their country of origin. Having become Canadianised while in the host country, many may feel like foreigners in Hong Kong, even to the point having lost fluency in Cantonese.

The need for assistance, however, will likely vary widely, such that an individualised approach to assistance is recommended (Tsang *et al.*, in press).

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