PSYCHOSOCIAL INTEGRATION OF SECOND AND THIRD GENERATION RACIALIZED YOUTH IN CANADA*

ABSTRACT

This article considers integration of second and third generation racialized youth in Canada from a psychosocial perspective. Integration is viewed as a multidimensional construct entailing micro (individual psychosocial experiences), meso (group behaviour) and macro (societal involvement) levels. A particular attention is paid to youth cultural identity and integration.

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As immigrant-receiving societies undergo changes in their population demographics, questions about integration remain at the forefront of theoretical, empirical, policy and practice discourse. The 2006 Census found close to 20% (more than 6 million) of Canada's population was foreign born (Statistics Canada 2007). Approximately 60% of newcomers were from Asia (compared to 12% in 1971), 16% from Europe (62% in 1971), 11% from Central and South America and 11% from Africa. Over 200 ethnic origins were reported and close to 16% (more than 5 million) of Canada's population was a visible minority (Statistics Canada 2008). The 2006 Census found that most foreign-born (85%) who were eligible for Canadian citizenship were naturalized (Statistics Canada 2007), which is one measure of successful host-country integration policy.

Pluralistic societies offer unique and dynamic opportunities for inter-group diversities and growth; however, they also face particular challenges. Among these are experiences of prejudice and discrimination by minority groups, including migrants and visible minorities. Different migrant groups can experience varying degrees of prejudice and discrimination in their countries of settlement, which often are influenced by broader historical and contextual factors, that can ultimately influence their cultural identity and acculturation process (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al. 2003, Phinney et al. 2006, Phinney et al. 2001). Research on the experiences of descendents of immigrants in Canada is an emerging field. Examining the integration experiences of descendents of immigrants is critical because their experiences are distinct from those of newcomer populations (Reitz and Somerville 2004). Despite being born in the country, some argue that this population may in fact experience higher levels of discrimination than newcomers (Reitz and Banerjee 2007).

Racialized youth

Recent events in Western immigrant-receiving countries with growing cultural and ethnoracial diversity have prompted public discourse on revisiting the merits of multiculturalism. A particular focus has been on the integration or marginalization of youth who are from immigrant backgrounds and yet are natives of the country. Integration of second and third generation youth,[1] particularly those from racialized groups,[2] has been in the media spotlight both in Canada and in other countries, such as France, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands (Kramer 2006, Murray 2006, Saunders 2006). The October 2005 riots in France among marginalized second and third generation North African youth have been critically analyzed within historical, social, political, religious, economic and global contexts and have led to the examination of the broader social structures that may create barriers to integration for these youth, who are mostly racialized (Hajdukowski-Ahmed 2006, Honiker 2006, Ossmani and Terrio 2006). In Canada, immediately after allegations of terrorist plotting by a group of Muslim youth in Toronto, the media engaged in heated discussions and reported on varying perspectives ranging from a backlash on multiculturalism to its reinforcement as a fundamental Canadian value.

These events have illuminated the increasing marginalization and social exclusion of youth and have called into question the success of multicultural policies and social integration initiatives in immigrant receiving countries (Barry 2001, Bissoondath 1994, Galabuzi 2001, Ornstein 2006,

Verkuyten and Martinovic, 2006). While Canada's immigrant population has steadily grown, and it's cultural and ethnoracial diversity continue to increase, the integration of immigrants is not always consistent or rapid. Although research on immigration and settlement has primarily centred on the experiences of newcomers, Boyd (2003) notes that there has been a growing interest in examining the experiences of descendents of immigrants, particularly those from racialized groups.

Reitz and Somerville (2004) argue that the integration experiences of descendents of immigrants are distinct from newcomer populations because many of the initial settlement barriers, such as language, are not relevant. Moreover, despite being born in the country, this population may in fact experience higher levels of discrimination than newcomers, which may evoke feelings of not belonging within mainstream society (Abouguendia and Noels 2001, Hall and Carter 2006). Some researchers refer to the differing levels of integration among first and subsequent generations as the "immigrant paradox," suggesting that the first generation of immigrants has higher levels of adaptation to the post-migration context than the second, and that over time adaptation of native-born youth may decline (Berry et al. 2006). Consequently, "understanding the experiences of second and third generation immigrants may provide clear indication of the long-term prospects for integration for racial minorities" (Reitz and Somerville 2004: 1).

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Psychosocial integration

Integration can entail a spectrum ranging from social inclusion and sense of belonging to social exclusion and marginalization. We refer to Hall, Stevens and Meleis's (1994) socio-political definition of marginality as the "condition of persons being peripheralized from the mainstream or centre of society, based on their identities, status and experiences" (as cited in Choi 2001: 197). Social integration is a multidimensional construct, recognized as the ability of individuals or groups to participate fully in Canadian society, regardless of economic, social or cultural background, which can be examined in terms of inclusion, participation and belonging (Ravanera, Rajulton and Turcotte 2003).

Youth attitudes towards the larger society can range from a positive sense of belonging to feelings of exclusion (Phinney and Devich-Navarro 1997). However, little is known about the impact of prejudice and discrimination on the integration of second and third generation racialized youth. Such influences may affect youth's integration on three levels: 1) individual psychosocial experiences (e.g., sense of belonging, cultural identity, self-esteem), 2) their group behaviour (e.g., intra- and inter-group relations) and 3) their broader societal involvement (e.g., civic engagement, volunteerism). We define the first two domains as dimensions of youth's psychosocial experiences in relation to integration; the third we recognize as youth's societal integration. Applying a systems perspective, all are interlinked and range from micro (individual psychosocial experiences), to meso (group behaviour) and macro (societal involvement) levels. The focus in this article is on youth cultural identity and integration.

Examining the relationship between cultural identity and level of integration among racialized youth is important. Understanding integration pathways among this population is particularly crucial given their higher levels of economic and social disadvantage as compared to the general Canadian population (Ornstein 2006). Galabuzi (2001) argues that such extreme disadvantage by racialization may diminish one's sense of belonging and integration within society. Cultural identity is a broad term used to encompass the interplay between ethnic, cultural, social, racial and national identities. Multicultural settings provide opportunities for becoming aware of one's cultural identity, not only in contrast to a dominant majority, but through ongoing contact with other cultures (Khanlou 2007 and 1999). This contextual conception implies cultural identity manifests itself in the presence of culturally different other(s).

To date, there is a paucity of research exploring cultural identity and integration of descendents of immigrants in Canada. Reitz and Somerville (2004) highlight the need for more research examining the relationship between social integration, including inclusion and marginalization, and the resultant psychosocial outcomes on youth, which include identity formation. Existing research suggests that cultural marginalization, a negative consequence of a lack of social integration, may lead to negative social and psychological impacts on an individual, including identity confusion (Choi 2001). Research with immigrant populations in the United States has revealed that second and third generation descendents of immigrants can also be at risk of poor social integration, particularly when there is delayed identity establishment and when families retain traditional cultural practices and customs (*Ibid.*). Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) comprehensive study exploring the lives of second generation immigrants in the United States

similarly found varying patterns of integration among this population.

While research is beginning to illuminate some of the links between levels of integration and cultural identity among youth, it is important to note that this research is predominantly conducted in the United States, which may limit the generalizability to experiences of youth in Canada given the distinct social and immigration policies (Reitz and Somerville 2004). In addition, existing research has focused more on the theoretical concepts of assimilation, economic and educational mobility, and self-identification of racial identities among descendents of immigrants (Alba 2005, Fuligni and Hardway 2004, Gans 1997, Portes and Rumbaut 2001, Portes and Zhou 1993, Waters 1994, Zhou 1997). As a result, there is a need to explore experiences of youth within the Canadian multicultural context in general and among Canadian-born second and third generation racialized youth in particular.[3]

In a previous study, entitled "Immigrant Youth and Cultural Identity in a Global Context" (IYCIP)[4] (Khanlou, Siemiatycki and Anisef 2003), we examined cultural identity, self-esteem and migration experiences of youth. Youth from four cultural groups, including both traditional and new source countries of migration to Canada, participated in the study. The IYCIP had a prospective, comparative, longitudinal design and utilized quantitative and qualitative data-gathering methods. The sample of 45 participants consisted of English speaking youth who were immigrants or descendants of immigrants and were between 17 and 22 years of age. Traditional immigration source countries included Italy (11 youth) and Portugal (8 youth). Recent immigration source countries included Afghanistan (9 youth) and Iran (17 youth).

The youth's cultural identity was found to be complex and fluid, and significantly influenced by different contexts, including the broader socio-political context, in which it was constructed. The participants had varying levels of integration within Canadian society both as newcomers and descendents of immigrants. For example, Canadian-born youth from a Portuguese background revealed that many of their Canadian-Portuguese peers were not integrated in terms of educational success, frequently dropped out of school and generally felt marginalized from mainstream Canadian society. Canadian youth from an Italian background, on the other hand, felt that as a group, descendents of Italians (both in Canada and in the United States) had achieved success along various dimensions of integration including political, economic and cultural. In both groups, although the youth were born in Canada (except for one youth from the Portuguese group), many of them had a strong affiliation to their ancestors' country of origin and culture.

Youth in the traditional source countries relayed experiences of prejudice and discrimination for the most part within the context of their parents' or grandparents' lives; however, youth in the new source countries discussed direct experiences. Four main themes emerged on Afghan and Iranian immigrant youth participants' experiences of prejudice and discrimination: 1) societal factors influencing prejudice, 2) personal experiences of discrimination, 3) fear of disclosure and silenced cultural identity and 4) resiliency and strength of cultural identity (for a detailed discussion, see Khanlou, Koh and Mill 2008).

As others have observed, the more integrated into society youth become, the higher their psychosocial functioning (Phinney et al. 2006). New research is needed in Canada that will expand on the findings of studies such as the IYCIP and examine the integration pathways of Canadian-born racialized youth. Examining integration from multiple vantage points of youth, parents and others will facilitate the development of comprehensive and innovative public policies, programs and practice recommendations to eliminate barriers and facilitate better integration of racialized youth. In addition, findings will contribute to the discourse on multiculturalism and provide new directions to theory building on integration in culturally diverse settings.

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Notes

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1 By second generation, we refer to children born in Canada to one or both foreign-born parents. By third generation, we refer to children born in Canada to Canadian-born parents.

2 By racialized groups, we refer to Galabuzi's definition of "persons other than Aboriginal peoples who are non-Caucasian in race and non-White in colour" (2001: 10).

3 There are also research initiatives under way in Europe examining the integration of second generation. For example, see The Integration of the European Second Generation (TIES) project at www.tiesproject.eu/content/view/20/35/lang,en/.

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