

CHAPTER ONE

Navigating Dual Heritage: Identity Formation and Cultural Adaptation of Chinese Jamaicans in the Caribbean and North America

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ABSTRACT

The process of identity formation and cultural adaptation among Chinese Jamaican immigrants is a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by a confluence of cultural, social, and individual factors. This paper explores identity formation through three key theoretical frameworks: Social Identity Theory (SIT), Acculturation Theory, and Hybrid Identity Theory. SIT elucidates how Chinese Jamaicans categorize themselves and others within Canadian society, while Acculturation Theory examines how Chinese Jamaicans integrate their Jamaican cultural background and diasporic experiences within the Canadian context. Hybrid Identity Theory, on the other hand, emphasizes the fluid and evolving nature of their identity as it merges Chinese, Jamaican, and Canadian influences.

The interplay of these theories provides a nuanced understanding of how Chinese Jamaicans navigate their dual identities, balancing their cultural heritage with the demands of a new social environment. The salience of their ethnic identity, as influenced by situational and individual factors, further shapes their self-perception and social interactions. The integration of Social Identity Theory and Identity Theory (Stets & Burke, 2000) offers a comprehensive view of how identity activation occurs in response to contextual factors and personal commitment.

Additionally, the application of intersectionality reveals the complex dynamics of race, ethnicity, and cultural heritage in shaping the experiences of Chinese Jamaicans. The challenges they encounter, including cultural adaptation, community integration, and systemic discrimination, underscore the need for a more inclusive understanding of identity within multicultural societies. The experiences of Chinese Jamaicans can therefore be understood through a process of double displacement, in which Chinese cultural identity was first transformed through creolization within Jamaican society and later renegotiated again through migration and racialization in North American contexts.

KEY WORDS: Jamaica, Chinese, Hakka, identity, adaptation, immigration, Canada

Chinese identity in the Caribbean: Construction and Reinterpretation

The history of Chinese migration to the Caribbean offers a unique perspective on how ethnic identities are formed, transformed, and renegotiated across multiple social and geographic contexts. Chinese communities in Jamaica developed within a colonial society shaped by racial hierarchy, creolization, and cultural exchange. Over time, these historical conditions contributed to the emergence of a distinct Chinese Jamaican identity that blended elements of Chinese heritage with Jamaican cultural practices.

The development of Chinese Jamaican identity in Jamaica has been shaped by a complex interplay of historical, cultural, and socio-political factors. Historical migration from southern China in the 19th century, primarily as indentured laborers, marked the beginning of Hakka presence in Jamaica.

This paper argues that Chinese Jamaican identity is shaped by a process of double displacement, in which Chinese cultural identity was first transformed through creolization within Jamaican society and later renegotiated through migration and racialization in North American contexts.

First Wave - mid-1850s to late 1870s

The first wave of Chinese migrants arrived in the Caribbean as indentured laborers primarily from Guangdong province in Southeast China, with the Hakka being predominant. Upon arrival, there entered a colonial society with a rigid racial hierarchy as the Chinese migrants faced racialization and marginalization, being caught between the dominant Black and white populations (Shibata, 2013, page 2). They were neither at the top, like the Europeans, nor at the bottom, with the African descendants who had been freed from slavery. This intermediate position

was both a blessing and a curse. On one hand, they were not subjected to the same level of oppression as the former slaves; on the other hand, they faced their own set of challenges and prejudices.

Despite facing discrimination, the Chinese were often preferred over other groups due to their reputation for “hard work” (Shibata, 2005; Look Lai, 2006). Chinese labourers were portrayed as “super laborers” who were not only inherently inclined towards hard work but also capable of working without regard for their rights or individuality. Lowe (2015) argues that the enslaved individuals were portrayed as a fictional representation of “free” labour but were in fact subjected to racialized coercion. This occurred during a period when the enslaved were denied ownership over their bodies, work, life, and death. This allowed the colonial state to control the various types of labour performed by both the people in the metropolis and those in the colonies, all while upholding the false notion of inclusive freedom. Therefore, by bringing in Chinese labourers at no cost, the British were able to maintain their wealth and dominance in the colonies through the use of racial capitalism, social hierarchy, and oppression, even after the abolition of slavery (Lowe, 2015).

Second Wave - 1890s to 1940s

The second wave of Chinese migrants came as voluntary migrants, many of whom were ex-indentured workers or their descendants. This period saw the expansion of the Chinese community and the establishment of Chinatowns (Bohr, 2004; Green, 2017; Shaw, 2021). The Chinese adjusted to the new environment while maintaining their traditions, leading to the development of a localized Chinese culture. The Chinese community in Jamaica not only

preserved its cultural uniqueness but also highlighted it by establishing exclusive Chinese trade associations, schools, newspapers, and similar institutions. While the elder generation of Chinese individuals showed a preference for endogamy, a traditional Chinese education, and overall ethnic consolidation, the younger generation of Chinese individuals displayed a preference for a Western education and socializing with their middle-class creole peers (Shaw, 2021).

In Jamaica, connections were not largely structured based on social class. On the contrary, individuals of Chinese origin, regardless of their economic status, were unified (at least in the eyes of the non-Chinese populace). The corporate ethnic identity of the Chinese community in Jamaica persisted into the early twentieth century through clan associations, Chinese-language schools, and other community institutions that reinforced ethnic solidarity. However, by the mid-twentieth century, the rise of Jamaican nationalism and the broader process of creolization encouraged many Chinese Jamaicans to adopt West Indian cultural practices and identities. This shift involved embracing local linguistic and social norms such as speaking Jamaican patois or Jamaican English, participating in Christian religious institutions, intermarrying with Afro-Jamaicans and other creole populations, and increasingly identifying with Jamaican national culture rather than maintaining a distinct diasporic Chinese identity (Bohr, 2004; Shaw, 2021; Shibata, 2013). As scholars note, these processes did not erase Chinese identity but rather transformed it into a hybrid form shaped by the interaction of Chinese cultural traditions, British colonial influences, and Afro-Caribbean creole society.

Over time, Chinese Jamaicans established a strong presence in the retail trade sector, owning numerous dry goods stores and supermarkets. Their influence extended beyond commerce, contributing significantly to Jamaican culture, industry, religion, and politics (Look, 1993). Despite encountering prejudices and misconceptions, Chinese Jamaicans built community

institutions and networks, fostering unity and creating lasting wealth for future generations (Mintz & Price, 1992).

However, their economic success and growing visibility also generated resentment, culminating in the 1918 Anti-Chinese riots in Jamaica. Scholars attribute the unrest to a combination of economic competition, wartime tensions, cultural isolation, and the circulation of rumors and misinformation (Lee, 2021). The Chinese community's role as economic intermediaries, a result of their historical ties to retail, made them susceptible to resentment and blame during crises. World War I conditions such as inflation and food shortages, acted as immediate catalysts.

The economic trajectory that integrated Chinese migrants into Jamaica's retail sector also made them vulnerable to hostility during periods of economic and political tension. Their prominence in the grocery retail trade, especially in small neighborhood shops, generated resentment among some Afro-Jamaican consumers and competing local traders, who accused Chinese shopkeepers of price manipulation, unfair credit practices, and economic exploitation (Wong, 2015). The unrest stemmed not only from competition over retail control but also from cultural concerns and perceived threats to the Jamaican middle class. The rise of a Chinese shopkeeping class was viewed as a challenge to Jamaican cultural identity and societal balance (Lind, 1958, Shibata, 2005). According to Lee Loy (2015), Chinese Jamaicans were often blamed for disrupting social norms and allegedly fostering vagrancy among Jamaicans, with their success being seen not as an economic benefit but as a form of cultural erosion and economic threat.

Hakka women

Hakka women began to migrate to Jamaica in larger numbers during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Initially, the Chinese migrants to Jamaica, like those to other parts of the Caribbean, were predominantly male. The imbalance in the sex ratio was a significant issue, leading to intermarriage between Chinese men and local women (Look Lai, 1988).

However, early Chinese migration to Jamaica was overwhelmingly male, and the small number of Chinese women initially limited the formation of Chinese families within the colony. Many Chinese men therefore formed unions with Afro-Jamaican or mixed-race women, contributing to the emergence of a creolized Chinese Jamaican community shaped by both Chinese and Afro-Caribbean cultural influences. Over time, as economic conditions improved and family reunification and chain migration became possible, more Chinese women, particularly Hakka wives and relatives, joined their male counterparts in Jamaica. By the early twentieth century, the gender ratio within the Chinese Jamaican community became more balanced, facilitating the establishment of more stable family units and contributing to the growth of the locally born Chinese Jamaican population (Bryan, 2004; Lee, 2004; Shibata, 2013). Hakka women in Jamaica played a significant role in shaping the Chinese Jamaican community's identity (Lee, 2004). They navigated the challenges of immigration, language barriers, and cultural expectations in Jamaica with resilience, adaptability, and a strong work ethic. Upon arrival in Jamaica, they faced the daunting task of building a new life in a foreign land with a different language and culture, often without the support of extended family or community.

Immigration presented them with the challenge of adapting to a new environment and culture, as well as overcoming the financial and logistical barriers associated with long-distance

migration. Many Hakka women were young brides who traveled to Jamaica through family reunification and chain migration, leaving behind their familiar surroundings in China. Upon arrival, they had to quickly adjust to their new roles as wives, mothers, and co-owners of family businesses while learning to navigate Jamaican society. Language barriers were a significant hurdle for the Hakka women. With limited or no formal education in China and without the benefit of attending school, they had to learn English through practical means, such as by reading labels and signs in their shops. This often left them socially isolated, as their ability to communicate was restricted to their immediate family and the Chinese community. Despite these barriers, they managed to run their businesses and care for their families, often displaying resourcefulness and ingenuity in overcoming communication gaps.

Cultural expectations also posed challenges for the Hakka women. They were expected to adhere to traditional Chinese values and roles, which included being subservient to their husbands, managing large households, and raising numerous children. They tolerated polygamous marriages and the frequent absences of their husbands due to business or personal pursuits. Despite these expectations, they found ways to assert their influence within the family and the business, often taking on more responsibility and making significant contributions to the family's financial stability.

They maintained their cultural practices and traditions while adapting to the Jamaican context, creating a hybrid culture that was both Chinese and Jamaican. They also played a vital role in the economic life of their families and the broader community, managing family businesses and contributing to the family income.

Despite their limited education, the Hakka women placed a high value on education for their children, encouraging daughters to pursue professions traditionally reserved for sons and teaching domestic skills not typically associated with masculinity in Chinese culture. This approach to education and gender roles helped break down traditional barriers and foster a more progressive identity within the community. Women's experiences with arranged marriages, transnational family arrangements, and the prolonged absence of husbands working in retail or migration networks often required them to assume greater economic and household responsibilities, contributing to shifts in gender roles and family dynamics within the Chinese Jamaican community.

Third Wave - late 1970s/1980s onwards

The third wave of Chinese migrants, often referred to as the “New Chinese,” includes contractual workers and entrepreneurs who arrived in the Caribbean in recent decades. These newcomers are often perceived as more transient and less integrated into local society, with many intending to return to China or migrate onward to wealthier countries after achieving economic stability. Their arrival has also introduced new cultural and linguistic distinctions within Chinese Caribbean communities, as long-established Chinese Jamaicans, whose identities have been shaped by generations of creolization, may not always share the same social networks or cultural practices as more recent migrants (Shibata, 2013). Political shifts in post-independence Jamaica after 1962, marked by a focus on Black nationalism, placed Chinese Jamaicans at the center of broader debates about race and national identity (Cox, 2024). The rise of the Black Power Movement during this period had a profound effect on how Jamaicans viewed themselves,

promoting African pride and dignity while challenging racism and European dominance. The 1970s, however, brought economic and political instability under Prime Minister Michael Manley, leading to a significant exodus of Chinese Jamaicans to the United States and Canada.

The Process of Identity Formation and Cultural Adaptation

Identity formation and cultural adaptation are complex processes explored through various theoretical insights. Notably, Social Identity Theory (SIT) by Henri Tajfel and John Turner examines how individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups, influencing their self-awareness and behavior. This theory offers an insightful explanation of how Chinese Jamaicans identify with their distinct cultural backgrounds and interact within Canadian society.

Hogg et al. (1995) differentiate between identity theory and social identity theory, focusing on individual roles and their impact on behavior and group dynamics. Social identity theory provides a framework for understanding intergroup relations, while identity theory emphasizes social context and identity salience. The authors propose integrating both theories, analyzing chronic identities and interpersonal social interaction, and focusing on socio-cognitive processes and intergroup relations. This approach helps understand the unique identity negotiation processes of Chinese Jamaican immigrants in Canada. They propose exploring the differences between role identities and social identities and considering the strengths of each theory in relation to the other to better understand how individuals construct, maintain, and express their cultural and national identities in various social contexts.

Acculturation Theory

Acculturation theory, initially developed by anthropologist John Berry, explores how individuals from one cultural background adjust to and integrate with a new cultural environment. According to Berry (1997), acculturation involves a range of processes through which immigrants interact with and adapt to the dominant culture while striving to maintain their original cultural identity. Berry identifies four main strategies for acculturation: assimilation (adopting the new culture and relinquishing the old), separation (maintaining the original culture and avoiding interaction with the new culture), integration (balancing both cultures), and marginalization (rejecting both the original and new cultures).

In the context of Chinese Jamaican immigrants, acculturation theory helps to understand how these individuals navigate their new Canadian environment while attempting to retain their cultural heritage from Jamaica. This theory elucidates the varying degrees to which Chinese Jamaicans may choose to integrate, separate, or assimilate into Canadian society, reflecting their unique experiences and adaptation strategies (Berry, 1997).

Hybrid Identity Theory

Hybrid identity theory, introduced by sociologist Stuart Hall (1990), examines the formation of new identities that emerge from the interaction of multiple cultural influences. Hall's (1990) concept of hybridity emphasizes the fluid and dynamic nature of identity, which is continually shaped by the blending of different cultural elements. This theory is particularly relevant for understanding the experiences of individuals who navigate multiple cultural contexts,

such as Chinese Jamaicans who merge their Chinese and Jamaican heritages with their Canadian experiences.

Hybrid identity theory suggests that identity is not fixed but rather a hybrid construction resulting from the interplay between various cultural influences. For Chinese Jamaicans in Canada, this means that their identities are formed through a combination of their Chinese roots, Jamaican cultural experiences, and their new experiences in Canada. This theory provides a framework for analyzing how Chinese Jamaicans develop a unique identity that integrates aspects of their diverse backgrounds while adapting to their new cultural setting (Hall, 1990).

Acculturation theory and hybrid identity theory offer complementary perspectives on the identity negotiation processes of Chinese Jamaican immigrants in Canada. While acculturation theory focuses on the strategies immigrants use to adapt to a new culture while preserving aspects of their original culture, hybrid identity theory delves into the formation of new, blended identities that reflect their multifaceted cultural experiences. Together, these theories provide a robust analytical framework for understanding the complex dynamics of identity development among Chinese Jamaicans. They highlight how individuals negotiate their cultural identities amidst varying pressures and opportunities, ultimately shaping their sense of self in the context of their immigrant experiences.

To better understand the identity experiences of Chinese Jamaicans in Canada, the theories of identity activation and salience, as discussed by Jan E. Stets and Peter J. Burke (2000), offer valuable insights. Their work explores how and when identities are activated and the significance of salience in this process, drawing from both social identity theory and identity theory.

Social Identity Theory and Salience

Henri Tajfel and John Turner, emphasizes the role of salience in determining how identities influence perception and behavior. According to Verkuyten (2018) and Stets and Burke (2000), salience refers to how prominently an identity is activated in a given situation, which affects how strongly group membership impacts an individual's thoughts and actions. For Chinese Jamaicans in Canada, the salience of their ethnic identity can fluctuate based on various factors such as social contexts, interactions with other ethnic groups, and personal experiences.

In this context, salience is influenced by the interaction between the perceiver's characteristics and the situational fit. Accessibility, the readiness of an identity category to be activated, is affected by an individual's current tasks, goals, and experiences. For instance, a Chinese Jamaican's ethnic identity might become more salient in situations where cultural heritage is a focal point, such as during community events or when encountering ethnic discrimination.

Fit, on the other hand, refers to the alignment between the specific identity category and the situational context. For Chinese Jamaicans, the fit between their cultural identity and the social environment in Canada can determine how prominently their ethnic identity emerges. In environments where multiculturalism is celebrated, their Chinese Jamaican identity may be more salient compared to contexts where there is less recognition of ethnic diversity.

Identity Theory and Salience

Identity theory, as articulated by Sheldon Stryker (1987), views salience as the probability of an identity being activated based on an individual's commitment to that identity. Stets and Burke (2000) note that this commitment can be both quantitative (e.g., the frequency of role engagement)

and qualitative (e.g., the significance and meaning attached to the role). For Chinese Jamaicans, the salience of their ethnic identity is influenced by their commitment to their cultural heritage and community involvement.

The stronger and more embedded an identity is in the social structure, the higher the likelihood of its activation. For Chinese Jamaicans, commitment to their ethnic identity may be reflected in their participation in cultural practices, involvement in community organizations, and personal connections to their heritage. This commitment enhances the probability that their Chinese Jamaican identity will be activated, especially in situations where their ethnic background is relevant.

Chinese Jamaican Identity in Diasporic Context

Chinese Jamaican identity reflects the complex intersections of migration, race, and cultural belonging within diasporic contexts. Emerging from the historical migration of Chinese laborers and traders to Jamaica in the nineteenth century, the Chinese Jamaican community developed within a predominantly Afro-Caribbean society shaped by colonial legacies and processes of creolization. Over time, Chinese Jamaicans negotiated identities that were neither exclusively Chinese nor fully assimilated into Jamaican society, but instead reflected hybrid cultural affiliations shaped by intermarriage, economic roles, and evolving social relations. When members of this community later migrated to countries such as Canada, these layered identities were further reshaped as individuals navigated new systems of racial classification and multicultural belonging.

To fully understand identity activation among Chinese Jamaicans, it is important to integrate insights from both social identity theory and identity theory. Social identity theory emphasizes the role of situational context, particularly how factors such as situational fit and identity accessibility influence the salience of group identities. Identity theory, by contrast, focuses on the role of individual commitment and the strength of attachment to particular identities in shaping when and how they are activated.

Taken together, these perspectives provide a more comprehensive understanding of the conditions under which Chinese Jamaican identities become salient. In multicultural environments that recognize and celebrate diverse cultural backgrounds, both situational fit and individual commitment may reinforce the expression of Chinese Jamaican identity. In less inclusive environments, however, identity activation may vary. In some contexts ethnic identity may become less visible, while in others it may be expressed more strongly as individuals seek to preserve cultural traditions they perceive to be threatened or at risk of erosion. These dynamics are particularly relevant for diasporic communities such as Chinese Jamaicans, whose identities have been shaped by the historical migration of Chinese laborers and traders to Jamaica and the evolving social contexts in which this community developed. Stets and Burke (2000) highlight the close relationship between social identity and self-identification. Social identity refers to categories and meanings that exist within the social structure and shape how groups are collectively understood. Self-identification reflects the individual's subjective experience of these categories and the psychological significance they attach to group membership. Through this process, individuals interpret social categories and incorporate them into their sense of self, allowing group membership to influence their thoughts, emotions, and behavior. However, self-identification does

not always align neatly with socially defined categories. Individuals may embrace, resist, or reinterpret available group identities depending on their social experiences and personal commitments. Identity expression is also shaped by the social context in which individuals operate. Verkuyten (2018) notes that individuals may emphasize or downplay aspects of their identity depending on the social environment and the perceived relevance of group membership in a given situation.

Understanding Self-Identification and Identity Activation

Understanding the experiences of Chinese Jamaicans in Canada through Verkuyten's (2018) framework of self-identification involves examining the roles of perception and motivation in shaping their ethnic identity. Perception relates to how individuals view themselves in relation to their social groups and how this influences their identity within different social contexts. For Chinese Jamaicans, this involves their self-view concerning their Chinese, Jamaican, and Canadian backgrounds. Their self-perception is shaped by personal experiences and how they are categorized by others within the Canadian mosaic, influencing their navigation of cultural identity.

Motivation refers to the psychological factors driving an individual's identification with a particular group. For Chinese Jamaicans, motivation may be rooted in a strong connection to their cultural heritage, driven by family traditions, personal values, and a desire to affirm their identity amid external pressures. This motivation manifests in various forms, such as engagement in cultural practices and community involvement, reinforcing their commitment to their Chinese Jamaican identity.

Additionally, the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) is essential for understanding the experiences of Chinese Jamaicans. Intersectionality examines how multiple social identities interact within broader systems of power and inequality to shape individuals' lived experiences. While intersectionality is often discussed in relation to identities such as race and gender, it is also useful for examining how different forms of racialization intersect across social contexts. Chinese Jamaicans occupy a complex positionality shaped by their Chinese ancestry, Jamaican cultural background, and migration to societies such as Canada. In Jamaica, Chinese communities have historically occupied a minority position that sometimes generated economic and social tensions within a predominantly Afro-Caribbean society. In Canada, Chinese Jamaicans may encounter racialization both as people of Chinese descent and as Caribbean migrants within a multicultural but stratified society. These overlapping experiences illustrate how identity is shaped by multiple and shifting forms of marginalization and belonging across different national contexts. As a result, Chinese Jamaicans often navigate multiple and sometimes competing racial classifications that shape how their identity is understood by others and expressed by themselves.

Integrating these perspectives provides a comprehensive understanding of the dynamic and multifaceted nature of self-identification among Chinese Jamaicans. It highlights that identity is not static but continuously shaped by personal and situational factors. Recognizing this complexity fosters deeper empathy and understanding of the diverse experiences of individuals with intersecting identities, contributing to a more inclusive and cohesive society.

Cultural Specificity in Identity Theories

Shaw (2021) and Misiaszek (2019) apply these theories to Chinese Jamaicans, revealing the interplay between their Chinese and Jamaican identities. The research shows a context-dependent identity shift, a constant negotiation of identity, and a comparison process between the immigrant's home and host nations.

Teelucksingh (2006) and Shibata (2013) examine how Chinese Jamaican immigrants adapt to life in the United States and Canada. Amid various challenges, this group incorporates elements from their dual identities and adjusts to the changing socio-economic landscapes of their new homes. The resilience of these immigrants shines through as they build connections within their communities and contribute to the societal fabric of their adopted nations.

Through the lens of intersectionality, identity can be understood as an evolving and complex phenomenon shaped by multiple interacting factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, religion, sexual orientation, and ability. These dimensions do not exist independently but intersect to shape how individuals experience belonging, opportunity, and marginalization. In the context of this study, intersectionality is particularly useful for examining how Chinese ancestry, Jamaican cultural identity, and migration to Canada interact to shape the lived experiences and identity negotiations of Chinese Jamaicans.

This framework provides a useful lens for examining how Chinese Jamaicans negotiate identity across multiple cultural and national contexts, where racial classification, migration histories, and cultural belonging intersect in complex ways.

Understanding the intersections of social identities and how they interact is crucial for comprehending the full spectrum of social dynamics. Intersectionality sheds light on the

compounded effects of belonging to multiple marginalized groups and how these effects can vary across different contexts. For example, a Black woman may face unique challenges that neither Black men nor white women encounter due to the combined impacts of both racial and gender discrimination.

Intersectionality challenges simplistic, one-size-fits-all approaches to understanding social issues, urging us to consider the nuanced and layered realities of people's lives. By embracing this complexity, we can better address the systemic inequalities that permeate our societies and strive towards creating more equitable and inclusive environments for all. Ultimately, intersectionality not only enhances our comprehension of identity but also equips us with the tools to advocate for social justice more effectively.

Applying SIT and SCT to Chinese Jamaicans

In complex social dynamics like the duality of identity among Chinese Jamaicans, these theories provide a comprehensive understanding. Highlighting the importance of social categorization and group dynamics, the theories show how Chinese Jamaicans negotiate their dual identity in varying contexts. From shifting identity salience to the drive for achieving a positive social identity, the theories unlock the complexities of their intergroup behavior.

According to Hornsey (2008), the core principles of Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Self-categorization Theory (SCT) (Turner, 1987) provide a framework for understanding group processes and intergroup relations. SIT focuses on social categorization, which refers to the natural tendency to categorize individuals into social groups based on various characteristics such as race, gender, nationality, or arbitrary distinctions. Social identity is an individual's self-concept derived

from their knowledge of their membership in a social group and the value and emotional significance attached to that membership.

Intergroup behavior is driven by the motivation to achieve and maintain a positive social identity, often leading to intergroup differentiation (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Hornsey, 2008).. Social comparison is central to how individuals and groups establish their identity and self-esteem. When individuals belong to groups perceived as occupying a lower position within a social hierarchy, referred to in social identity theory as low-status groups, they may employ different strategies to achieve positive distinctiveness. These strategies can include leaving the group, making downward comparisons with other groups, or pursuing collective social change (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In this context, low-status groups refer to social groups that experience relative disadvantage or reduced social power within a particular social structure. Importantly, group status is not determined solely by how members view themselves but also by how groups are ranked by others within broader social hierarchies. External perceptions, shaped by historical, economic, and political factors, influence which groups are viewed as prestigious, dominant, or subordinate within a society. In colonial and postcolonial contexts, these hierarchies are often shaped by racial and ethnic classifications that position minority communities differently within the social order.

Social categorization theory (SCT) further posits that individuals can categorize themselves at different levels of inclusiveness, ranging from superordinate to subordinate identities (Turner et al., 1987; Hornsey, 2008). The salience of a particular social identity depends on its accessibility and fit in the moment, and depersonalization occurs when a social category becomes salient. Groups are cognitively represented in terms of prototypes, which define the typical or ideal attributes of group members and prescribe appropriate attitudes, emotions, and behaviors for the

group context (Hornsey, 2008). Together, social identity theory and social categorization theory emphasize the importance of group membership in shaping individual and collective behavior, providing a framework for understanding how social categories influence perception, motivation, and action in intergroup contexts (Stets & Burke, 2000; Verkuyten, 2018).

Both SIT and SCT can be applied to understand the duality of identity among Chinese Jamaicans. SIT suggests that individuals can categorize themselves at different levels of inclusiveness, shifting between their Chinese, Jamaican, or hybrid identity depending on the context. This can lead to a shift in identity salience, such as Chinese identity being more salient in a setting with other Chinese individuals, while Jamaican identity might take precedence in a Jamaican cultural event. SIT also suggests that individuals strive for a positive social identity by seeking positive distinctiveness for their group. Chinese Jamaicans might emphasize different aspects of their identity to achieve this distinctiveness. For example, they might highlight their Chinese heritage in a predominantly Jamaican setting to stand out, or vice versa.

Social comparison is central to both SIT and SCT, as Chinese Jamaicans might compare themselves to other Chinese or Jamaican groups to evaluate their own identity. The group prototype, the ideal or typical attributes of group members, might influence how they perceive themselves and others. SIT outlines strategies for managing dual identity, such as focusing on dimensions where their group is positively evaluated or engaging in social change to improve the status of their group. SCT's concept of depersonalization suggests that individuals conform to group norms when their social identity is salient.

Lastly, the social identity approach recognizes the context in which individuals find themselves can significantly influence which aspects of their identity are most prominent. In

summary, the social identity approach provides a framework for understanding how Chinese Jamaicans negotiate their dual identity, emphasizing the importance of social categorization, group dynamics, and the context in which identity is expressed.

Hakka Identity

Chinese Jamaicans are a unique ethnic group with a dual identity, being both Chinese by ancestry and Jamaican by nationality. This duality can be understood through the lens of identity theory and social identity theory. Identity theory emphasizes role identities, negotiation, and commitment, as Chinese Jamaicans may have roles that reflect traditional Chinese values while also participating in roles within Jamaican society that adhere to local norms and expectations. Social identity theory suggests that Chinese Jamaicans belong to two distinct social categories: the Chinese diaspora and the Jamaican national community. Their social identity may shift depending on the context and which group membership is made salient.

Chinese Jamaicans may self-identify differently based on their personal experiences, preferences, and the social environment. Some may strongly identify with their Chinese roots, while others lean more towards their Jamaican identity. The relationship between social identity and self-identification involves both ascription (how they are defined by others) and self-ascription (how they define themselves). Chinese Jamaicans may face external pressures to conform to stereotypes or expectations about what it means to be Chinese or Jamaican, while internally, they may negotiate their own sense of identity.

Identity negotiation is another aspect of Chinese Jamaican identity, where they assert, redefine, or negotiate their identities in social interactions. Cultural adaptation is another aspect of

Chinese Jamaican identity, as they may adapt their cultural practices and identities in response to the social environment. These theories provide a framework for understanding how Chinese Jamaicans navigate their identity duality, highlighting the social processes that shape their identity and the individual agency they exercise in defining and expressing themselves.

Chinese Jamaicans navigate the complexities of racial visibility and citizenship within the context of migration and diaspora through various strategic approaches shaped by their unique historical, cultural, and social positions. Central to these strategies is the deployment of the "Hakka" identifier, which allows them to assert a distinct ethnic identity that bridges their ancestral roots in southern China with their Jamaican and diasporic realities. Cultural conferences and associations, such as the Toronto and New York Hakka Conferences, serve as crucial platforms for redefining Hakka identity in multicultural contexts, emphasizing inclusivity and cultural richness (Cox, 2024).

Chinese Jamaicans' experiences significantly challenge and expand existing frameworks of race, diaspora, and transnationalism. Their cultural practices and identities reflect a dynamic process of hybridity (Hall, 1990) and creolization (Lee-Loy, 2010, Shaw, 2021), enriching understandings of diaspora as a product of intermingling influences from Africa, Asia, and Europe.

Constructing Identity: The Experience of Chinese Jamaican Immigrants in North America

While this paper focuses primarily on the experiences of Chinese Jamaicans in Canada, the limited body of research examining this community in the Canadian context necessitates drawing on studies conducted in the United States. Chinese Jamaican migration to both countries emerged from similar historical migration patterns beginning in the 1970s, and the two societies share overlapping racial classification systems that shape how diasporic identities are interpreted. As a

result, scholarship on Chinese Jamaicans in the United States provides useful comparative insight into how individuals navigate racial ambiguity, cultural hybridity, and diasporic belonging in North American contexts.

The United States and Canada have distinct approaches to race and multiculturalism, yet Chinese Jamaican migrants in both settings often encounter difficulties fitting their multicultural backgrounds into existing racial and ethnic categories. As a result, they may experience moments of misunderstanding, misclassification, or scrutiny as others attempt to interpret their identity within familiar social frameworks.

Chinese Jamaican immigrants in the United States and Canada experience a complex process of identity construction influenced by their diverse cultural heritage and new environments. Traditional racial and ethnic categories in the United States, such as White, Black, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American, do not adequately represent the multicultural backgrounds of Chinese Jamaicans (Misiaszek, 2019). As a result, many individuals encounter forms of racial ambiguity or misclassification when navigating systems that rely on rigid racial categories. To address this mismatch, Chinese Jamaican immigrants often engage in flexible forms of self-categorization, adopting a range of self-labels or country-of-origin identifiers that better reflect their lived experiences. Misiaszek (2019) notes that this process is highly context dependent, with individuals emphasizing different aspects of their identity depending on social and cultural circumstances. This fluidity in self-categorization highlights both the dynamic nature of ethnic identity and the challenges Chinese Jamaican immigrants face in locating themselves within existing racial and ethnic classifications.

Misiaszek (2019) describes Chinese Jamaican identity as a “protean construct,” shaped through ongoing interactions between personal experience and social context. Rather than fitting neatly within existing racial or ethnic categories, Chinese Jamaican immigrants often negotiate their identity through a process of comparison between their cultural experiences in Jamaica and the racial frameworks encountered in North America. As a result, identity becomes multidimensional and context dependent, reflecting the ways individuals navigate competing cultural expectations and systems of classification.

These dynamics reflect the layered nature of Chinese Jamaican identity, shaped by historical creolization in Jamaica and further renegotiated through migration to North American societies.

Challenges Faced by Chinese Jamaican Immigrants in Racial and Ethnic Identity in North America

Navigating the migration process and dual ethnic identity for Chinese Jamaican immigrants moving to Canada since the 1970s involves a complex interplay of cultural adaptation, community integration, and personal identity negotiation. This journey begins with understanding the historical context that prompted their migration. The 1970s in Jamaica were marked by significant political and economic turmoil, pushing many Chinese Jamaicans to seek stability and better opportunities abroad. Canada, known for its multicultural policies and economic promise, emerged as a favorable destination. Upon arrival, Chinese Jamaican immigrants faced numerous challenges, including culture shock, cold winters, navigating stereotypes related to their Jamaican accents, and the task of economic integration.

Chinese Jamaicans navigate a dual ethnic identity shaped by both Chinese ancestry and Jamaican cultural upbringing. In Canada, this identity is negotiated within a multicultural framework that differs from the racial classification systems more commonly emphasized in the United States. Canada's official multiculturalism policy encourages the preservation and expression of diverse cultural traditions, which can create space for hybrid identities to coexist with national belonging. Within this context, Chinese Jamaican immigrants balance elements of their Chinese heritage and Jamaican upbringing while adapting to Canadian society. Maintaining traditional Chinese customs, festivals, and cuisine can help preserve aspects of ethnic heritage, while participation in community organizations provides support and a sense of belonging. At the same time, individuals must navigate broader racial categories that do not fully capture their complex cultural background. Chinese Jamaican immigrants have a complex identity due to their Chinese ancestry, Jamaican upbringing, and new American or Canadian context. They face numerous challenges related to their racial and ethnic identity, including navigating a complex ethnic identity, experiencing internal conflict, facing identity denial and prescription, being a minority within a minority (Teelucksingh, 2006; Misiaszek, 2019), adjusting and acculturating, and dealing with mental health implications. The term "minority within a minority" highlights the complexity of their identity, which is not fully captured by broader North American racial and ethnic categories.

This process of adjusting to life in North America involves navigating new cultural and social landscapes that differ across national contexts. While racial categorization tends to structure identity discussions more prominently in the United States, Canada's multicultural framework places greater emphasis on cultural heritage. While the United States and Canada have distinct

approaches to race and multiculturalism, Chinese Jamaican migrants in both settings often encounter difficulties fitting their multicultural backgrounds into existing racial and ethnic categories. As a result, they may experience moments of misunderstanding, misclassification, or scrutiny as others attempt to interpret their identity within familiar social frameworks. These experiences reinforce the idea that Chinese Jamaican identity is protean in nature, as individuals continually adapt how they express and interpret their identity in response to shifting cultural and racial frameworks.

Canada's Multicultural Society

Chinese Jamaicans play a significant role in Canada's multicultural society, contributing to the diversity of the nation and highlighting the complex intersections of race, ethnicity, and culture. However, their experiences also reflect the limitations of multiculturalism in practice, particularly when it comes to issues of systemic discrimination and the challenges of achieving full social integration.

Discrimination and racism are common among Chinese Jamaicans, who face microaggressions and systemic barriers in areas such as employment and housing. The dual minority status of Chinese Jamaicans, being both Chinese and Black, often exacerbates these challenges (Henry & Tator, 2006). This discrimination affects their economic and social opportunities and influences their sense of belonging within Canadian society.

Chinese Jamaicans have made significant contributions to the Canadian economy, particularly through entrepreneurship. Many have established successful businesses in sectors ranging from retail to professional services, contributing not only to their communities but also to

the broader Canadian economy. Their entrepreneurial success is often rooted in the skills and experiences they brought with them from Jamaica and the networks they have developed within Canada.

Cultural exchange and multiculturalism are also significant challenges for Chinese Jamaicans in Canada. While multiculturalism is designed to support the cultural expression of all ethnic groups, it may inadvertently reinforce ethnic enclaves, limiting broader social integration. Case studies and personal narratives offer valuable insights into the dynamics of interethnic relations, revealing the complexities of their experiences and the specific challenges and opportunities that Chinese Jamaicans face in Canada. Understanding these dynamics is essential for fostering more inclusive and equitable interethnic relations in Canada.

In Canada, Chinese Jamaican immigrants encounter similar challenges as those in the United States. The Canadian multicultural policy may offer some support in navigating their complex identity, but they still face the challenge of fitting into broader ethnic categories that do not fully capture their unique background. Understanding these challenges is essential for professionals working with ethnic minorities and immigrants to provide the right support.

Cultural Hybridity and Identity Formation

The concept of cultural hybridity is central to understanding the identity formation of Chinese Jamaicans in Canada. They embody a layered identity, shaped by their Chinese ancestry, Jamaican upbringing, and Canadian environment. This hybridity allows them to connect with multiple cultural groups but also presents challenges in fully identifying with any single cultural

group (Li & Lee, 2005). The negotiation of these identities is an ongoing process, influenced by both personal experiences and broader societal dynamics.

Thompson and Bauer (2003) explore the concept of mixed identity among Jamaican migrants in Canada as a phenomenon that encapsulates the complex interplay of cultural, social, and national affiliations. This identity is a testament to the adaptability and resilience of these individuals as they navigate the integration process while preserving their Jamaican heritage. Unlike their counterparts in the United States, who tend to maintain a more distinct Jamaican identity, or those in Britain, who also develop mixed identities albeit in a different societal milieu, Jamaican migrants in Canada often embrace a dual cultural allegiance, identifying themselves as "Jamaican Canadian."

This hybrid identity is reflected in various aspects of their lives. Culturally, they may celebrate both Jamaican and Canadian holidays, integrate Canadian elements into traditional Jamaican cuisine, and participate in cultural practices that are a blend of both worlds. Socially, they engage with both communities, forming networks that span across the Jamaican diaspora and Canadian society. In terms of national belonging, they claim their place in Canadian society while also maintaining a strong connection to Jamaica, evident in their transnational ties and regular engagement with Jamaican communities, both locally and abroad.

The mixed identity of Jamaican migrants in Canada is also a product of their adaptation to the Canadian social and political landscape. Over time, their identities evolve, particularly among the second generation, who may have a more Canadian-leaning identity. This evolution is not just a personal journey but also a reflection of the broader changes in how race, ethnicity, and national identity are negotiated within Canadian society. The article suggests that Canada, similar to

Britain has seen significant shifts in the handling of race and ethnicity, with West Indians playing a pivotal role in cultural mixing and the formation of complex identities.

Evolving Connections to Hakka Heritage

Today, most Chinese Jamaicans, whether they reside in Jamaica or have migrated to North America, tend to have a muted connection to their Hakka heritage. This shift reflects the long historical process of creolization that shaped Chinese Jamaican communities, particularly among those born in Jamaica after the Second World War, who often identify primarily as culturally Jamaican. Over generations, the influence of Hakka language, customs, and community structures diminished as Chinese Jamaicans integrated into Jamaican society through intermarriage, participation in local economic networks, and engagement with broader Jamaican cultural life. For those who moved to Canada as young children or were born in Canada, their sense of identity is often shaped by a blend of Jamaican and Canadian cultural influences. In these contexts, individuals frequently identify as both Jamaican and Canadian, while maintaining only a limited connection to their ancestral Chinese ethnicity. This pattern may reflect both the earlier creolization of Chinese identity in Jamaica and the pressures of navigating racial classifications in North American societies, where Chinese Jamaicans may be categorized primarily through broader racial labels rather than through specific ethnic subgroups such as Hakka. As a result, Hakka heritage may become less central to everyday identity, even while elements of Chinese cultural heritage continue to influence family traditions and collective memory.

Conclusion

Globalization has influenced the concept of Chinese ethnicity by facilitating transnational connections and exposing the community to a wider range of cultural influences. This evolution reflects the community's ability to adapt to changing social dynamics while maintaining a distinct sense of ethnic identity.

The Chinese in Jamaica navigate their ethnic identity in the context of globalization and changing socio-economic landscapes through various strategies and adaptations. These include maintaining cultural ties with the global Chinese diaspora, accessing resources that support their ethnic identity, and preserving and promoting Chinese culture through organizations like the Chinese Benevolent Association and the Hakka Canadian Association.

The experiences of Chinese Jamaicans in Canada and the United States provide a rich example of how identity is shaped by cultural context and intersectional factors. By delving deeper into their stories and struggles, we gain a better understanding of the fluidity and complexity of identity. Moreover, it highlights the importance of recognizing and valuing diversity within our communities and embracing the multiplicity within each individual's identity.

As we continue to explore issues of immigration, race, ethnicity, and identity in our increasingly globalized world, we must remember the unique stories and experiences of marginalized communities, such as Chinese Jamaicans, and strive to create a more inclusive and equitable society for all. By celebrating the diversity within us and embracing the beauty of our intersecting identities, we can come together as one global community. Let us continue to learn from one another, uplift each other's voices, and actively work towards creating a world where everyone's identities are acknowledged, respected, and celebrated.

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