Introduction

Over the past one and one-half decades, immigration has accounted for approximately half of Canada’s population growth. Until the 1970’s, most of the immigrants entering Canada were from English speaking countries and an overwhelming number of immigrants adopted English, regardless of their mother tongue, as their working language once they settled into Canadian society. As Jedwab (2001) points out, less than five percent of all the immigrants currently living in Canada speak only French.

As former Immigration Minister Elinor Caplan noted, “Immigrants are a vital source of human capital that continues to expand our economy and strengthen our communities.” The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (2001) notes that one of the objectives of the Act is to enrich and strengthen the social and cultural fabric of Canadian society and to promote the successful integration of permanent residents and new immigrants into Canadian society.

The real lives of people are complex, multifaceted, and filled with creative compromises. In Canada, immigrants operate like signs carrying bundles of conflicting meanings. Immigrants find the process of physically relocating involves a new definition of who they are. Moreover, others, over whom the immigrant has little control, also will provide a definition as to the immigrants’ identity that may or may not be congruent with the one held by the immigrant. This notation is important in order to impress upon those studying immigration and developing policy that self concept and identity is a social
process that is not totally within the control of the immigrant. Finally, it should be noted that these definitions of identity will change over time and from place to place.

Before discussing how the various dimensions of identity intersect for the immigrant, we need to briefly identify the concept of identity, its creation and maintenance and the processes of change. Within this discussion, we also will look at the difference between instrumental and situational identity. We will then look at how identity can also become stigma and the consequences of such markers. No discussion of stigma can take place without addressing the issue of becoming marginalized. Third, we will look at the process of immigration being an immigrant, and the linkage to race/ethnicity/sex and language. A fourth goal of this paper will comment on the “intersections” of the various dimensions of identity. Finally, we will identify gaps in research activities and the priorities of research that need to be undertaken.

**Identity: Who Are We?**

All of us have a constellation of identities that make up our total self-concept. This constellation reflects a special nexus in which each of the dimensions is placed as well as the importance or priority attached to each. In the literature on “identity”, researchers have established two aspects of identity-self and social (Rummens, 2000).

**Self-identity:** These cognitive developmental processes are partially maturational and part socially influenced. This part of the self could be referred to as his or her “personality”. This component of identity allows an individual to situate him/herself in the social environs. This core identity reflects how various dimensions of self make up a constellation of self-dimensions, e.g., self-confidence, self-image. The development of self-identity is an internal process that allows the individual to establish her/his sense of placement in the larger cosmos. This is the core of one’s self-concept and is modified by his/her social milieu as they develop from young children to adults.
**Social-Identity:** The second type of identity, and related to the first, is that of socially constructed identity by others. That is, with certain “markers”, others will begin to tag the individual with certain attributes. As individuals progress through their social space over time, they come into contact with the social world. The influence of these events over time impact both the personal self-identity as well as the social-identity each of us has at any point in time. Moreover, the social world has an impact on the personal identity that is devoid of social markers. There is an importance in social definitions, the importance of labels and the power mobilized by those who are in a position to create, sustain, and delete labels and the meanings they confer.

The following diagram reveals the linkage between self and social identity. The diagram reveals that there can be variations on the extent of identity change that takes place as well as the nature of the change. Moreover, different identities vary in scope, scale and formality. For example, religions and languages may take on global scope, e.g., Islamic, Francophonie. In the example provided in diagram 1, point "a" reveals that there has been little change in identity produced by the “others” but self-identity has changed considerably. Conversely, point “b” reveals that the self-identity of the individual has not changed but that “others” have substantially redefined the identity of the individual in question. And, as noted, there is an entire area of “negotiated” identity where the individual negotiates what her/his identity will be for a particular time/context.

Diagram 1. Identity negotiation and type of change.

Note: Zero represents no change in self or social identity.

The environment in which one lives constructs one’s identity over time, in part. The adaptation may be conscious or it may be reflected in the more or less automatic
cumulative experiences. For example, one’s ethnic/racial identity will determine the relative closeness you feel toward other members of your group or the type and intensity of contact you have with members of your group (Jones, 1997). A parallel creation of identity may come about through a “reactive” process (the individual reacts to a time series of events that he/she experiences over time).

Cross (1995) has identified the various stages of identity formation. The first stage is referred to as the “pre-encounter” when statuses are not yet clear to the individual as to whether it is stigma or valued. At this point, the salience of the attribute is low. However, once an encounter (the second stage) takes place, the individual begins to learn of the value of the status. This is a crucial stage where the individual must decide to immerse him/herself into the status and social group or remain apart from it. An alternative strategy would be to try and become “bi-cultural”. Depending on the strategy chosen, identity conflict may emerge. In conclusion, identities are constructed and change as a consequence of both internal and external pressures.

As Helms (1995) points out, who one is depends, in part, on what group you belong to and what socio-political position that group has in society as well as how you are socialized into that group. Identity is, then, the cumulative consequence of cognitive, emotional and behavioural processes impacting on an individual over his/her life.

As the individual continues to participate in society, he/she must make the decision to “internalize” the status and act accordingly, to reject the status, or attempt to take on a “bi-cultural” identity. A final stage refers to the “commitment” stage where the individual makes a permanent decision with regard to his/her identity and enters the social environment with that commitment in mind. Nevertheless, commitment is always tested and as further encounters take place, the individual may shift his/her commitment. Identity is then a systematic way of accounting for how an individual adapts to his/her environment as noted below.
The following diagram illustrates the structure of identity within a social environment. This “onion skin” conceptualization of identity suggests that each one of the markers represents a covering of the core self that gives the individual his or her total identity. The actual sequence of how the identity dimensions are layered and the thickness (representing salience) of each marker will vary. What is important is identifying what the sequence is and how external stimuli will impact upon each of the layers. In other words, is language more important than religion? And in what context?

**Master Traits**

This discussion leads us into a debate that has yet to be resolved. The question focuses on the existence and importance of “master traits”. These are traits of an
individual that are conceptualized as the central or most important attributes of an individual that filter all social interactions and determine the core identity of the individual. For example, is race or sex of the individual a master trait? Or, put another way, are social interactions, no matter how or when they take place, dependent upon the race or sex of the individual? Lambertus (2001), Corenblum and Annis (1987), and Friedman and McAdam (1992) all have looked at the role of “Aboriginal” as a possible master trait.

We acknowledge the claim that identity can be both instrumental and situational. To claim otherwise would fly in the face of previous research [see the review of literature by Kazemipur (2001)]. Identity is situational and thus, the nature of the situation will impact differentially on each of the dimensions of identity. Again the questions are raised: “Are there master traits (markers)?” “Do all markers have the same importance?” “Are all markers equally resistant to external social pressures?” The previous diagram illustrated the "layering" process of identity in a different form but still reflected the overall conceptualization that the core self is comprised of many different dimensions. What the previous diagrams also illustrate is that there may be “master” traits (attributes about the individual) that are primary sources of providing the individual with his/her identity and guiding others as to how to act and react to the individual. The master traits are those attributes held by the individual that are determined by historical events as well as external social actors and remain important traits no matter what the context is. Does the trait evidence itself in all situations for most people such that they can react to it on a cultural bias? In our case, race (visible minority) and sex are two probable master traits that are ubiquitous and difficult not to perceive and react toward. To be certain, there are degrees of “race” as well as sex (gender) but research shows that a high level of accuracy as to the sex and race of individuals can be predicted. Moreover, even if the individual “misplaces” the identity of the other, they will react to the other as though he/she is really in that social category.

The master traits thus become the first filters of other people’s actions. In short, in our society, race and sex will be perceived immediately and culturally appropriate
responses will be formulated. The concept of “double or multiple jeopardy” emerges from the fact that some people have two or more master traits such as “visible minority” and female; attributes that have high salience but low value in our society. In some cases the master traits are congruent and show an alignment as all having negative valence. On the other hand, it may be more complex in that one of the master traits has a positive valence (a male) while another master trait such as race (non-white) has a negative valence.

We can observe each of the identities in different scales – in social structure to individual interaction and the identities (social categories) may be a fact (de facto) or a matter of law (de jure). Finally, it must be restated that, over time the categories may shift. For example, who is a “visible minority”, an Aboriginal, are matters of law and the criteria for such categories change as the super culture changes and eventually find their way in (or out) of everyday life.

**Instrumental versus Situational Identity**

As we continue our discussion of identity, two terms are especially important: the notions of instrumental identity and situational identity (McKay, 1982; Cornell, 1996). In the first instance, the argument is that symbols and collective ‘loyalties’ are mobilized specifically for the attainment of secular ends – principally of gains in political power and economic advancement. The often-unstated implication is that the material ends are the principal motivating forces underlying identity claims rather than the unquestioned or unquestioning loyalty to a collectivity (Roosens, 1989).

It is possible to act instrumentally and with commitment. Where material ends are contested – and not just the symbolic status of the collectivity – the commitment may be all the more deeply felt. Indeed this provides a clue to the problem of intensity – the clue being in the answer to the question ‘how much is at stake?’ For the most part, however, the implication of the instrumental view of identity is that there is a purposeful
appeal to loyalties in pursuit of gains that are visible to some or all putative members of the group.

If the concept of instrumentality suggests that identity and mobilization may be a matter of calculation rather than emotional commitment, the underlying concept of situational identity is more emotional than goals oriented. This is identity looked at from the individual’s viewpoint or what we have referred to as the action context. Individuals move, in their daily lives, from one social setting to another, and present themselves to different sets of ‘significant others’ – other people whose approval matters to the individual. Individuals in modern societies become skilled at judging their audiences and presenting themselves accordingly. For example, the children of migrants, born in the new home country, become aware of their parents’ expectations and try to make these congruent with what may be differing expectations of their school friends and teachers. These differences are sometimes portrayed as the problems of young people ‘caught between’ two cultures but in fact young people become skilled at coping with different sets of expectations, a skill that is for most people an essential, even commonplace, means of dealing with a life which crosses many institutional areas in which the audiences differ (Bradby, 1999). These interstitial zones of social life are frequently the ones in which cultures change and identities are modified.

The notion of situational identity certainly suggests a measure of freedom and choice in both assuming an identity and in conforming to expectations that are associated with it. But as we make different presentations to different audiences, so the different situations call for fine changes in our social stance and style. That is, we do not simply choose our self-presentation in different settings – rather we learn that different circumstances make different demands. Another way of saying this is to say that no one is a full-time ethnic, or a member of any of the other collectivities we have been looking at, at least not in the same way in all settings. In all these instances the salience of identity varies both in its meaning and its importance and partly because of this ‘situational’ character of identity, the actors retain a measure of control over their self-presentation.
Viewed from this perspective, identity is a dimension of social action and structure in three distinct ways: as a command principle, as a flexible principle, and theoretically as a nil principle. For example, ethnicity in Biloxi, Mississippi during the 60’s, was a command principle, in Kuala Lumpur today, it is a flexible principle, and in some contexts in some societies it is a nil principle. It is a nil principle wherever ethnicity is ruled out, by law or by broad customary consensus, that is where merit and equal treatment in principle govern admission to jobs, benefits and services even if these principles are breached and circumvented (Jenkins, 1986; Mason and Jewson, 1992). If ethnicity is rarely a nil principle, it may sometimes be no more than what Gans has called ‘symbolic ethnicity’ (Gans, 1979, 1994). However, the question still remains: can any one of the attributes we are discussing ever be a nil principle?

**Stigma**

Stigma is the identification of a trait or attribute of an individual that is used to differentiate individuals into different categories, groups or other boundaried social entities and has a negative value. Each stigma represents a social identity in a particular context. Hence you may be “stigmatized” in one context but not in another. Put another way, stigma are not intrinsic attributes but rather socially constructed, deconstructed and acted upon. There can be general consensus with regard to a stigma or there may be only a minority adhering to the social definition of the stigma. Moreover, the stigma may change value over time, it may disappear and new stigma may emerge (Jones, 1997:265). This points out that stigma will be subject to attributional ambiguity in some situations while having less ambiguity in other contexts (Crocker, Voekl, Testa and Major, 1991; Ruggerio and Taylor, 1995). When a person carries a stigma it is negatively responded to by some or all segments of society and thus one of the consequences imposed upon individuals who have “stigmas” is that they, either as an individual or group, become marginalized in the larger society. The attributes that form stigma which become the basis for marginalization are conceptualized as “master stigma” (Frable, Blackstone, Sherbaum, 1990).
Whatever the master status stigma is, e.g., race, ethnicity, sex, people holding these statuses are treated differently than those not having these statuses. In short, it is the most important attribute (stigma) in a particular context and this attribute determines the definition and social value attached to the person. If there is consensus in the super-culture about the stigma (master status), the only sensible strategy an individual can choose to achieve reprieve will be to withdraw to his/her sub-cultural environment. Table 1 illustrates the dilemma of those subject to having master statuses that are stigma in our society.

The information in Table 1 illustrates that the statuses (attributes of individuals) are not fixed and under certain circumstances some master statuses, e.g., ethnicity, are clearly visible (at a mosque or synagogue) but are unclear in other context (at a shopping centre). Moreover, within certain situations, the statuses may not be evaluated negatively. For example, being black in a black church will not be negatively evaluated by other participants and in fact the attribute of “blackness” may not be a status that is recognized. Finally, it should be noted that individuals have the opportunity to conceal certain statuses (stigma), e.g., gay/lesbian, ethnicity, if they choose (Frable, 1993).

**Table 1. The Relationship between the Value of the Master Status and the Ability to Perceive the Trait.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute (Status) Evaluation</th>
<th>Stigma (-)</th>
<th>Relative to Context</th>
<th>Valued (+)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Visibility</td>
<td>Skin Pigmentation</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Super Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to ascertain</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Subculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Individuals with stigma possess an attribute that means they are not fully acceptable members of the dominant group. Oyserman and Swim (2001) go on to point out that stigma creates a “taint” that is attached to an individual which signifies their marginalization.

**Becoming Marginalized**

We all belong to many groups and we declare our membership to these groups every day of our lives. For example, we belong to an organization we work in, a family, a community organization, a religious organization, and a voluntary association, all at the same time. The list goes on and while some memberships may be reflected every day, others are only exhibited on a monthly basis or less. Each of these memberships (groups) have definable values, beliefs, and outputs – stories, myths – and histories. However, some groups are more pervasive and enduring than others and those which are most pervasive and encompassing are called super-cultures. Those that are within such a dominant culture are referred to as embedded cultures (minority groups) and they have to function within the super-culture. Membership in the super-culture mean they have the ability to control the resources and opportunities available to all individuals.

Any individual that operates in both the dominant and minority worlds is referred to as “bi-cultural”. The resultant duality dilemma (Jones, 1997) is when one tries to exhibit elements of both cultures or tries to maintain the central tenets of both cultural worlds. The end result is that for those who live in two worlds – their lives are restricted in one but not the other – they become marginalized. We can extend this conceptualization by noting that individuals with multiple statuses may live in a “multicultural” world that poses even greater challenges to them.

Social markers are transnational in importance and impact upon each of us no matter where we live. However, which markers are important will vary from society to society. Thus, hair texture may be an important marker in one society but irrelevant in another. In addition to importance, each society places priorities on markers as to how
positive or negative they are. Canada is no different from other societies and has built up a repertoire of markers that can change value over time and space.

However, it should be noted that stigmatizing attributes that cannot be concealed might serve as a basis for creating a common bond that links individuals with similar attributes — social solidarity both within the subculture and in relation to the super-culture. When this happens, emotional and social support amongst this group is high. Group identification can also reduce feelings of marginality as the research on marginality suggests that group identification reduces feelings of marginality and produces a greater degree of psychological health for stigmatized groups (Jones, 1997).

Finally, it should be noted that individuals with stigma attached are not to be viewed as solely passive receptors of action directed toward them. They, like others, are both active constructors of their every day life as well as holding markers (usually involuntarily) that are used to stigmatize them. In short, while there are certainly actions directed toward them that they cannot stop, they can control the incidence and nature of these actions in a variety of situations.

**Being an Immigrant**

Immigrants arriving in Canada find themselves in a social environment that is confusing, frustrating, and challenging. In most cases they will find that holding the status of “immigrant” does not enhance their identity nor does it facilitate their ability to integrate into the host society. In short, once the immigrant is in Canada, there are few benefits to being an immigrant.

Immigrants by choice or coercion will embark upon a sojourn that leads them into a circumscribed community (boundaried community by race, ethnicity, religion, and language) or into the larger undifferentiated Canadian community. As noted above, this is sometimes a conscious choice while at other times, the decision will be made for them. For example, housing may be provided by host agencies. In other cases immigrants may choose their place of residence or have the financial resources to make
choices. The end result is that the social space they operate within will differentially impact their identity and behaviors.

At a more theoretical level, immigrants have two choices. First, they may physically and socially remain within the confines of a boundary community that is congruent with their multiple identities when entering Canada. Alternatively, they can remove themselves (both physically and socially), as much as possible, from previous identities and remain apart of the boundaried community.

The first strategy eases entry into the host society, strengthens existing identities, and produces less conflict (at least in the short run) for the immigrant. If the community is institutionally complete, individuals can participate in their new environment with minimal disruption to their lives and meaningfully participate in Canadian society. It will only be when crossing over the boundaries of the community and into the larger society that the immigrant will face difficulties. Chinese immigrants with no or little English/French have little difficulty in carrying out business, social/recreational activities and other forms of social interaction within the Chinese community. However, when they venture into the larger society, their lack of one of the official languages and their lack of understanding the cultural norms poses major hurdles for them. Usually, the result is only infrequent episodic forays into the larger society, culminating in the return of their boundaried community. The extent to which they enforce their boundaried community culture on their children will also have implications for how their children will integrate into Canadian society.

How institutionally complete the boundaried community it will also be an important factor in both the level of integration of immigrants as well as the degree of social cohesion of the country. Those communities that are expanding their institutionally completeness will offer members of the community (immigrants and native born) opportunities that will allow them to integrate into Canadian society through meaningful participation in the boundaried community. On the other hand, if the community is not developing institutionally complete structures, participants will be
stymied in meaningful participation and their ability to integrate into Canadian society. For example, if the number and type of job prospects are limited in the boundaried community, individuals (either immigrants or native born) will find living in the boundaried community restrictive, repressive, and limiting. The social and financial implications of such a scenario are indeed important for Canadians to understand.

On the other hand, if the immigrant entering Canada chooses to distance her/himself from the boundaried community, this may result in major short term (and possibly long term) social dislocations. Having to deal with concurrent issues that must be dealt with pose major challenges to the individual and can be overwhelming. Being forced to learn a new language and absorb the cultural differences in a variety of situations—work, home, recreation, religious—all at the same time, can be a formidable obstacle to overcome. Many are unable to do so given the social constraints and social programs under which they operate and the lack of social programs available, particularly in the area of language skills.

Nevertheless, these are the options posed for many immigrants entering Canada. It would seem that many try to blend the two options with varying degrees of success. The costs of being a model minority include a capitulation to the ideology of white superiority and a trepidation about forging alliances across class, ethnic or religion boundaries (Vaidhyanathan, 2000). On the other hand, remaining aloof from the dominant society can bring about exclusion and rejection.

Moreover, immigrants enter Canada, they must confront the social markers established in our society, the salience and value of each, and the context in which they are given different degrees of importance. A complex weave of actions and reactions emerges as immigrants try to find their way through their new social landscape.

For purposes of illustration, we will divide immigrants into three categories to more fully discuss how immigrants deal with identity and their subsequent integration into society.
Young immigrants. Young immigrants (1-9 years) enter Canada with the minimalist self-concept and identity. Their cognitive development is of sufficient infancy that the identity is of sufficient flexibility and malleability that making changes is relatively easy and painless.

These young people tend to be engulfed by Canadian culture and language so that their identity quickly becomes “Canadian”. While there are other markers that will impact this identity, these young people find it easy to fit into most of the social institutions of Canadian society. What may happen is that the child begins a collision course with her/his parents as the cultural gulf begins to widen. The extent to which this happens is a function of how linked the parents are to the collectivity to which they identify and the degree to which they expect their children to mirror the boundaried community’s culture. On the other hand, if the young immigrant is a “visible minority” her/his participation in Canadian society may be circumscribed by the level of prejudice and discrimination exhibited by the host society. Depending upon the social environment the young child finds her/himself within the resultant identity of the child will be quite different.

Youth. These immigrants are those who are 10-20 and have at the time of immigration developed a core self-identity as well as established their basic linguistic skills. They are then moved into a new cultural context before becoming integrated adults. For this group, they have an arrested self-development and tend to become marginalized people in their new host society. They are bilingual/bicultural at best but in most cases are neither. Strong forces from multiple sources impinge upon their loyalties and thereby create the marginal person.

Adults. Those immigrants entering Canada as adults have established their self-identity and other social attributes, e.g., language skills, religious affiliation. They normally left their country of origin to seek a better life either for themselves and/or for their children. In most cases, they are cognizant of having to endure a transitional
period in their new society as they replace their old cultural system, with the future guiding their actions. In one sense, they never become Canadians but fully appreciate that if they and their children are to benefit from the social and economic benefits to be offered by Canada, they must acquiesce to the minimum standards of Canadian culture. Nevertheless, at the same time, they tend to retain as much of their country of origin culture as possible, e.g., values, language skills, religious beliefs, and maintain their previous identities as the best strategy for coping with the new super-culture.

Intersections

A rather different question, and historically underexplored (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992; Guillaumin, 1995; Bradley, 1996; Barot et al., 1999), is that of the relationship between different dimensions of identity, e.g., gender and ethnicity, how they intersect and how both intersect with other dimensions of identity such as social class. For example, in subordinated ethnic groups, women and men are treated differently within the sexual mores, subordinate men being regarded as a threat from whom superordinate women must be protected, while subordinate women are regarded as being available to superordinate men.

Carrying on with our example, one of the striking features of migrant labour in the world has been the feminisation of labour ‘opportunities’ in which women as sex workers and maids are regarded simultaneously in gender and ethnic terms (Phizacklea, 1999). One of the key intersections of ethnicity and gender is the fact that, in so many instances of the maintenance of ethnic boundaries, women are assigned the leading role in ensuring the cultural reproduction which is seen as essential to the real and symbolic survival of the ethnic community. The boundary of the ethnic is often dependent on gender and there is a reliance on gender attributes for specifying ethnic identity. Much of ethnic culture is organised around rules relating to sexuality, marriage and the family, and it is expected that a true member will perform these roles properly (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992, p.113). Is this true for the intersection of other forms of
identity? Does language and ethnicity have reinforcing properties or are they contradictory? At the present time, few theoretical models have been developed and even fewer attempts to empirically assess those models are available. The following table addresses the intersection of various dimensions of identity with regard to their salience and value.

A number of identity markers in our society begin to take on salience and value as immigrants settle in. For purposes of this paper, we will only focus selected dimensions of identity and how they impact on the immigrant and their experience.

Table 2 shows that many of the dimensions of identity are mutually reinforcing. That is, we find many aspects of identity to be important and have high social value. Those individuals holding a constellation of these factors exhibit social capital that will promote their success in integrating into society. On the other hand, those individuals holding few valued identity attributes or holding several but with very different valences will find that they do not have sufficient social capital to participate in many of the social institutions that make up society.

Table 2. Relationship Between Salience and the Value of Social Markers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salience</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>race-“white”</td>
<td>religion-protestant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sex - male</td>
<td>sexual orient-heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>age – young</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>language – English/French</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>race- Visible minority</td>
<td>religion-Buddhist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sex - female</td>
<td>sexual orient-homosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>age – old</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>language – heritage language</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Having built the above typology, it is clear that there are social contexts in which the above relationship is not operative. In certain circumstances we can envisage being female as being a valued attribute. We point this out to remind the reader that social context is a powerful factor in assigning the value and salience of identity.

The linkage and the processes we have identified have been simplified through the presentation of a framework. This framework, it is argued, will be applicable to all immigrants. Nevertheless, the application of the framework to various cohorts of immigrants may be quite different. For example, we know that the experiences of immigrant males and females is quite different. And, to make this even more complex, it will vary by whether or not the male/female is a visible minority. The framework presented allows us to establish the salience and value of different social markers and only then can we determine the interaction of the various dimensions of identity.

Can the framework be applied to both anglophone and francophone Canada? We see no reason why the structure of identity or the process of becoming an immigrant would be different for those entering the francophonie world compared to the anglophone institutional order. The salience and value of various markers might differ but the processes and interaction will be the same.

It should be noted that other social attributes such as hairstyle have nil value in our society and may be totally overlooked as having any relationship to ones identity and/or other dimensions of identity. And finally, lesser attributes may or may not be congruent with master traits (statuses or stigma). For example, seeing a black female with "corn-braided" hair is congruent while the same type of hairstyle on a blonde male or even female would be viewed as incongruent. Nevertheless, the type of hair would probably not be viewed as having "master status/stigma" that has much value and would not factor high in determining one’s identity or influencing social relationships. Having a particular religion may not be important and being gay/lesbian may not be detected unless the person informs you.
Being stigmatized produces stress in the lives of those so marked. Those holding such markers can, however, respond in a number of ways and thus their identity may be impacted. For example, they can try to avoid (or minimize) situations where negative consequences of their stigma will result or they can try to maximize situations in order to counter stereotypes, e.g., be overly competent in specific fields (Pinel, 1999). While this confirms the ability of individuals to be active participants in society, it also reflects that fact that identity is subject to many field forces and the consequences are not always clear. For example, someone who is stigmatized and not doing well in school because of language problems, may decided to “disengage” from the educational system to avoid discrimination/stereotyping and thus place little value on education as an important dimension of their “self value” (Oyserman, et al, 2000). While the immediate action is taken to deal with a stigma, the indirect consequence is to devalue education as an important fact in their life.

Gaps and Research Needs

Identities are socially constructed through a complex interaction between individuals and their society. The boundaries among groups are thus variable – both across societies and in particular societies because of different historical circumstances (Waters, 1998). Carrying out research to identify those boundaries will be an important component in unraveling the complex intersection of various dimensions of identity.

The issue of social incorporation or inculturation (Isajiw, 1999) can be directed at social patterns, language, values, and identity. The extent and speed at which incorporation or integration takes place is a result of several factors such as availability of opportunities (ranging from the work to the religious world), the extent of prejudice and discrimination that is allowed, the level of education, the mores with regard to intermarriage and the rigidity or flexibility of the social system, e.g., the extent to which the super-culture is prepared to accept members of other social groups into its own ranks.
We need to carry out research in order to contextualize the various social categories that are used to refer to people who are perceived as different within the economy and polity whose historical and present forms contribute the stage on which social dramas are played out. Each of the social categories we identify reveals they are grounded and constructed, material and symbolic. We can show how each of these categories shifts their ground as circumstances change but they also have a “real” social basis in the enduring significance which people attach to these categories – whether they are ethnic, language or sex (Fenton, 1999). Moreover, these differences are organized and mobilized within the context of the political and economic structure.

Major research initiatives need to be mounted to look at the integration process of adults vs. youth vs. children. Policies and programs developed by municipal, provincial, and federal agencies seem to take on a homogeneity factor and once put in place, are expected to apply to all types of immigrants. The current pan-Canadian study now being undertaken by researchers across Canada (supported by the Canadian Institute of Health Research) is focusing on immigrant children and the results will be comparable to the data being collected by the National Longitudinal Children and Youth Study.

How do policies and programs that impinge upon the various dimensions of identity facilitate or hinder integration? How do these policies impact upon the various dimensions of identity of the immigrant? And finally, how does the organization of our society contribute to the valence and salience of markers and stigma?

Economic and labour force participation of immigrants in various sectors of the institutional structure need to be undertaken—both in the context of within boundaried communities and outside these communities. For example, are individuals participating in boundaried communities limited in terms of salaries, job promotions, entrepreneurship? Are their limited choices for individuals forced (choosing) to remain in the institutional network of the boundaried community? Do members of boundaried communities have less social capital than those who move outside the boundaries?
Others such as George and Mwarigha (1999) have pointed out that there is little information about the linkage between immigrant integration and the Canadian legal system.

A pluralist society such as Canada is predicated on the existence of separate ethnic and racial groups and on specific modes of political and social accommodations among these groups. The national identity is “non-ethnic” by virtue of the universalist commitment – proclaimed in the prevailing constitutional and political discourse – to provide the benefits of citizenship, irrespective of any ascribed or asserted group affiliation. To what extent do we find the various dimensions of identity “command”, “situational”, or nil?

Currently the social rules in Canada (with one exception – Indians) governing identities is self-identification. It is generally accepted that individuals are allowed to choose their own identification for social and administrative purposes. For a large proportion of the population, this involves a great deal of choice. For example, people of mixed ethnic ancestry, people of united origin but can be defined in a number of ways; e.g., immigrants from Jamaica can define themselves as Canadian, Jamaican, West Indian, or black. What are the contextual and social processes that impinge upon individuals so that they choose one over the other?

Different historical and political circumstances have created different expectations and official reactions to groups defined as ethnic groups of European origin and groups defined as minority/social groups or non-European origin; visible minorities. What are the structural arrangements of our major institutions that impact upon the various dimensions of identity and their intersections?

Finally, we need to find new ways of describing and analyzing group interaction that stresses the boundedness of the entities to be studied with more emphasis on process. Given that most immigrants settle in urban areas, we need to find a way of “re-texturing” the city (Lithman, 2001, personal correspondence). As such, Lithman
argues that “belonging, distinction and inequality” are the key concepts that will need to be researched in the future. For example, belonging, whether based on language facility, sex, ethnicity, or race, is the result of an on-going negotiation as to what demands are being acted upon, the time context, and the salience of the dimension. At the same time “belonging” is potentially a result of the social organizational structure of the community in which the immigrant finds his/her self. Distinction is another concept in need of research—how people recognize markers and how they react to them.

Conclusion

Identities come in constellations although there are times and places where individual dimensions of identity play an important role in development of self concept, determining behaviour, and influencing integration into society. Immigrants are particularly complex in that they may have two sets of identity constellations. Moreover, some of their individual dimensions of identity may differ from home to host country. Adding to the complexity is the situational context in which identity is evaluated.

It is clear that no model of identity development for immigrants has been developed. Moreover, there seems little interest in ferreting out those factors that might bring about shifts in constellations of identities. Nevertheless, there is widespread agreement that identity is based upon social and organizational factors that impact upon immigrants.

Our next step will need to investigate the relationship between identity and social cohesion of society. Put another way, does it really make a difference if an individual has high or low “ethnic” identity compared to “gender” identity? What are the consequences of having some dimensions of identity more supported than others? Will Canada become more socially cohesive if we can provide all immigrants with positive self-images with regard to their boundaried community? The answer to these and related questions are important for both policy and program decisions.
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