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ADOLESCENT'S CULTURAL IDENTITY AND NEIGHBOURHOOD ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

Objective: this study aims to find out how adolescents in Australia identify themselves culturally, and how adolescents from different cultural groups differ in their assessments of their neighbourhood environments. **Methods:** one hundred and sixty-six adolescents in Sydney completed a self-administered questionnaire, which collected information of their neighbourhood environments and their cultural backgrounds. **Results:** adolescents reported a great variety (67) of different cultural backgrounds, clustered into three cultural groups: Australian cultural identity group, Heritage cultural group, and Biculturalism group. Although no significant difference was found on most neighbourhood environment factors between the cultural groups, adolescents from Heritage cultural group scored significantly lower on the factor Vegetation & Facilities. **Conclusions:** The results of this study suggest that the overall neighbourhood environments for adolescents from different cultural groups are satisfactory. However, ethnic minority adolescents live in neighbourhoods with less vegetation and facilities, which suggest that spatial inequity related to ethnic backgrounds still exist in Australia.

BACKGROUND

Urban Space Inequity

In the social sciences, space is conceptualised as a theoretical tool to understand power. Space is not just a context of social actions; rather it actively structures and mediates social actions. The use and control of space are continuously negotiated, and power is spatialized through this process (Jaffe, 2009). In order to understand the relationship between space and power, French philosopher Michel Foucault (1984) proposed the concept of spatial 'technique' of domination: those in power attempt to maintain their position through division and control of space, and through the separation of groups or individuals. Therefore, space is a vital part of the battle for control and surveillance of individuals, and it is a battle for domination. Foucault used the military camp as an example of spatial representation of power. In a military camp, the military hierarchy can be read in the ground itself, by the place occupied by the tents and the buildings reserved for each rank (Elden & Crampton, 2007; Foucault, 1984). Some other examples of spatial inequity related to power include the differences between 'developed' and 'developing' nations, 'good' and 'bad' neighbourhoods, and the uneven distribution of resources through space (Jaffe, 2009).

There is a rich body of research that investigated the inequities of urban space. There has been a particular interest in investigating how new migrant groups struggle to make a new home in cities and gain acceptance from the broader urban population. There are evidences worldwide showing that as newcomers attempt to become integrated into the urban fabric, they suffer varying levels of stigmatisation and socio-spatial marginalisation (Jaffe, 2009). For example, urban-rural migrants in developing countries often start their urban living in slums and squatter areas (La Greca, 1977; Richardson, 1977); and minority-ethnic

background immigrants and refugees to the developed countries are often segregated in low-income neighbourhoods (Ihlanfeldt & Scafidi, 2002).

In developing regions, cities are destinations of rural-urban migration. Estimated by United Nations Human Settlements Program (2003), 95 percent of the world's population growth in the next 30 years will be absorbed by the urban areas of less developed regions, whose population will probably rise from approximately 2 billion in 2000 to just below 3.5 billion in 2030. The rapid urban migration in developing regions has been associated with poverty (Brockerhoff & Brennan, 1998) and a widespread proliferation of slum and squatter areas (Costello, 1987). A number of observers have suggested that slums and squatter areas function as the predominant first destination for rural-urban migrants (La Greca, 1977; Richardson, 1977). As a result, the United Nations estimates that somewhere between 835 million and 2 billion people now live in some type of slum, which can be found in many metropolitan areas in Asia, Africa and Latin America (Sheehan, 2002).

In developed countries, ethnic minorities' limited financial and other resources, the prejudice and discrimination against them, and sometimes their own preferences have resulted in ethnic segregation in cities (Ihlanfeldt & Scafidi, 2002; Kumar & Leung, 2005). For example, in Canadian cities, new immigrant groups and visible minorities such as 'Black' Africans, are more likely than non-immigrants to live in poor-quality housing and in neighbourhoods with high rates of poverty (Kazamipur & Halli, 2000; Opoku-Dapaah, 2006). In the United States, racial segregation remains a prominent feature of the metropolitan areas, and there is growing isolation of poor minority households. For example, poor Blacks and Hispanics were far more likely than poor Whites to live in poor neighbourhoods (Squires & Kubrin, 2005). Cross-national research indicated that on ethnic and racial segregation is lower in European cities than in American cities (Musterd, 2005). However, as different European cities attracted people from different non- or late-industrialized countries or former colonies (Musterd, 2005), urban ethnic segregation has been the subject of heated discussions in Europe (Ireland, 2008). For example, the majority of the residents of Marxloh (a disadvantaged neighborhoods in Germany) are Turkish immigrants, who have a much lower housing and living standard than other resident groups (Hanhörster, 2001).

Multicultural Australia & National Identity

Australia was home to indigenous people for at least 40,000 years ("Indigenous Australians", 2011), until it was established as a British colonial settler society in 17th century ("History of Australia", 2011). Various policies of the Australian government had been trying to keep Australia "British and White". For example, at the start of World War II, Prime Minister John Curtin said: "This country shall remain forever the home of the descendants of those people who came here in peace in order to establish in the South Seas an outpost of the British race" (Australian Government: Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2009). As a result, the Australian population has been homogenous by the end of World War II. In the 1940s, 99% of Australian population had British heritage. Only 9% of Australians were born overseas, and 90% of them were from either UK or New Zealand (Mirjana, 2011).

After World War II, multi-ethnic immigration from Europe changed the homogeneity of Australian population. There were large numbers of immigrants from European countries such as Italy, Greece and Yugoslavia (Mirjana, 2011; "White Australian Policy", 2011). As the immigration policy encouraged European immigration and sought to have non-white refugees deported, Australia was almost exclusively European in its population's ethnic

origin (Poulsen, Johnston & Forrest, 2004). As late as the 1960, 51 percent of migrants to Australia were born in the UK and Ireland (Johnson, 2002). In 1971, approximately 87% of Australia's population was Anglo-Celtic in origin, and the majority of the non Anglo-Celtic ethnic population comprised southern, central and eastern Europeans (Poulsen, Johnston & Forrest, 2004).

After the ending of the White Australian policy and the removal of any ethnic criteria from the Immigration Act in 1973, the ethnic mix of Australian society has changed dramatically. Concurrently, a 'multi-cultural' policy was developed (Poulsen, Johnston & Forrest, 2004; "White Australia Policy", 2011). In the 1970s, most migrants arrived in Australia from South-East Asia. Then over the past decade, people from North-East Asia increased their representation from 1.7% in 2000 to 3.0% in 2010. Today's Australians speak over 260 languages and identify with more than 270 ancestries. According to United Nation's Trend in International Migration Stock, Australia had one of the highest proportions of overseas-born residents (27%), third highest behind Singapore (41%) and Hong Kong (39%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

According to Australia's Multicultural Policy (Australian Government: Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011), multiculturalism speaks for fairness and inclusion, and aims to enhance respect and support for cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. It embraces shared values and cultural traditions; and allows those who choose to call Australia home the right to practice and share their cultural traditions and languages within the law and free from discrimination. Some scholars have argued that Australian identity is now multicultural, for example,

'Today, Australia derive from more than 150 ethnic backgrounds...each wave [of immigration] extended the reach of our egalitarianism and tolerance, our understanding of what Australian democracy is...multiculturalism is not a threat to Australian identity and ethos – it is inseparable from it' (Keating, 1995, p. 31)

However, many Australians have a different attitude towards 'multiculturalism', linked to issues of cultural privilege and national identity (Dixson, 1999; Johnson, 2002). The Media continues to reinforce the 'white' Australian culture through their under-representation and misrepresentation of ethnic minorities (Ley & Murphy, 2001). The preferential position of the host society remains, through its culture, language, institutions and laws (Marden & Mercer, 1998). For example, in 1999, a National Multicultural advisory Council argued that:

'The British and Irish heritage, which includes our democratic system and institutions, our law, the English language, much of our humor and oft-quoted distinctive values of the fair go, egalitarianism and mateship, together provide the foundation on which Australian multiculturalism has been built' (NMAC, 1999, p.4).

Australian Adolescence's Wellbeing: Comparing the Centre and Periphery Cultural Groups

Studies that compare various well-being indicators between native and immigrant groups suggested relative harmony and lack of racial tension in the society. Unlike Europe and North America, the socio-economic and demographic profile of immigrants in Australia tend to be better educated, possesses a wider range of skills and enjoy higher overall levels of inclusion in mainstream society. Part of the explanation for this lies in the point system used in Australia to select applications for

immigration, which ensures that many successful applicants already enjoy relatively high levels of human capital upon arrival in Australia (Katz & Redmond, 2010).

Children younger than 18 years old represent around a quarter of the Australian population. They comprised 25% of the total population in 1997 and 23% in 2010. At June 2010 there were 5.1 million children aged 0-17 in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1999, 2010). It is estimated that around one third of the children in Australia were born overseas or have at least one parent who was born overseas. According to a systematic review of Katz and Redmond (2010), immigrant children's wellbeing in Australia differs somewhat from other countries. The wellbeing of migrant children appears to be relatively good compared to the general Australian population and migrants in other countries. The migrant children do as well as or better than native-born Australian children in various dimensions of well-being, including physical and mental health, education and participation in the labour market. In many dimensions, outcome indicators among children with English- or non-English-speaking backgrounds are similar. In addition, even the most disadvantaged immigrant groups do relatively well on some measures and immigrant children generally tend to fare reasonably well (Katz & Redmond, 2010).

Although the overall picture of immigrant children's well-being is satisfactory in Australia, children from certain cultural groups face difficulties such as discrimination, racism, trauma of separation from the cultural and social networks of their countries of origin, and challenges to adjusting to the Australian culture and lifestyle (Katz & Redmond, 2010). For example, In Australian universities, Asian international students are experiencing discriminations from domestic students in that they are perceived to be less "trustworthy" (Guillen & Ji, In press). In addition, there are many evidences showing that indigenous Australian children and Torres Strait Island children are discriminated by the mainstream society. White adolescents acknowledge the existence of racism against indigenous Australians and recognize their own privileged "white" position (Hatchell, 2004).

Research Questions

There are studies indicating that immigrant children's wellbeing is satisfactory in Australia, however, children from certain cultural groups face difficulties such as discrimination and racism (Katz & Redmond, 2010). Although Australia has embraced 'multiculturalism' for over 30 years, there are critiques of Australian multiculturalism in that some scholars believe that the 'ethnic others' are still considered by the government and the Anglo-Celtic majority as the passive objects of policies designed to benefit that majority (Hage, 1998). There is a suggested power imbalance between the Anglo-Celtic majority and ethnic others, and this power imbalance should be reflected in the urban space inequity. As previous studies on children's wellbeing haven't looked at urban space inequity, this study sets out to fill this gap.

In order to fill the gap in the literature, this study sets out to investigate the relationship between cultural identity and urban space. Using adolescents in Sydney as the participants, the research question of this study is: How is Australian adolescents' cultural identities relate to their neighbourhood environment?

METHODS

Research Design, Instrument & Participants

This research is designed as a survey study, and Sydney was chosen as the research site. Sydney is the state capital of New South Wales, and has a population of approximately 4.1 million (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007). Over 30 years ago, Sydney, like the rest of Australia, was almost exclusively European in its population's ethnic origins (Poulsen, Johnston & Forrest, 2004). In recent years, it has attracted around 40 percent of Australia's immigrants (Burley, 1999). First- and second-generation immigrants comprised over 50 percent of Sydney's total population, and the majority of the first-generation immigrants are from non-English-speaking background countries (Burley, 1999). Sydney is one of the most multi-cultural cities in the world, with its residents coming from about 140 different ethnic groups. In some areas of the city, more than 50% of the people over the age of five speak a language other than English at home. In some schools such as Campsie High School, up to 95% of the students are from a non-English speaking background (Tsang, 1995).

A self-administered questionnaire was designed to collect data. The respondent's cultural identity was evaluated by an open-ended question on "cultural background". Neighbourhood environment was assessed using a 20-item scale of children's neighbourhood socio-physical environment. The scale was largely based on a pilot study that conducted prior to this project. All the items in the scale were developed from both the literature review and the interviews with children and young people. Each item was judged on a five-point Likert scale (range from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree').

High schools in Sydney were approached by phone calls and letters, and nine schools were willing to participate in accordance with the research requirements. There were 249 copies of questionnaires distributed in these nine schools and 166 were returned, achieving a response rate of 66.7%. There were 85 boys and 80 girls (one respondent did not report the gender information). The school year of these respondents ranged from Year 7 to Year 12, and the majority (N=127) of the respondents were in Year 11 and Year 12. They lived in 95 suburbs such as Ashfield, Lane Cove West and Ryde.

Data Analysis

Exploratory Factor Analysis. After data cleaning (deleting two items with large numbers of missing data and deleting outliers), there were 18 items and 361 cases. An exploratory factor analysis (principal factor extraction) with varimax rotation was conducted allowing for corrections among factors. Evaluation of eigenvalues greater than 1.0 suggested five factors. An inspection of the scree plot revealed a break after the fourth factor, however, indicated a four-factor solution. Within these factors, individual items were retained if their loading was greater than .45. Items were eliminated if an item's loading was greater than .30 for more than one factor. All remaining 12 items load strongly on their factor. The initial eigenvalues of these factors were 3.98, 2.64, 1.50 and 1.34. The variance accounted for by these factors was respectively 22.11, 14.66, 8.35, and 7.46 for a proportion of 52.58 of the total variance. After that, each factor was given a descriptive label. Factor one included items that were primarily related to 'Location & Convenience', factor two towards 'Neighbours', factor three towards 'Vegetation & Facilities', and factor four towards 'Route to School'. Factor scores were then calculated through SPSS Compute, summing scores of the items loaded on each factor. The variances accounted by the factors revealed that Location & Convenience was the most important factor in children's assessment of their neighbourhood environment, followed by Neighbours.

RESULTS

Cultural Identity. Not surprisingly, adolescents' answers to the question "cultural background" had a great variety. There were 67 different answers, such as "mixed", "Chinese", "Anglo Saxon", "Arabic" and "English/Philippino" (Figure 1). There is no universally accepted breakdown of the population by ethnicity or background. The ethnical, linguistic, country and regional categories used to classify population are not used clearly and consistently among research projects conducted in Australia. Some widely adopted categories include Migrant, Non-English speaking background, Language Other Than English, Culturally and linguistically diverse, and country and region of origin (Katz & Redmond, 2010). Drawing on the literature of acculturation, and in light of a study on the structure of cultural identity in an ethnically diverse sample of American young people (Schwartz, Zamboanga, Rodriguez, & Wang, 2007), this study divided the respondents into three groups: Australian cultural identity, Heritage cultural identity, and Biculturalism (Figure 1).

Adolescents in the Australian cultural identity group identified themselves as 'Australian' and 'Aussie', or they referred their cultural background as 'English', 'Anglo-Saxon', etc (Figure 1). These adolescents came from the majority, main-stream Australian culture. Adolescents in Heritage cultural group identified themselves as member of a specific ethnic group (e.g., Chinese, Lebanese, or Italy). They are the ethnic minority adolescents who chose to retain their heritage cultural values. Adolescents in Biculturalism group identified themselves as coming from mixed cultural background (e.g., English/Arab). These adolescents adopted Australian cultural ideas while at the same time retain some of their heritage cultural ideals and behaviours (Schwartz, et al., 2007).

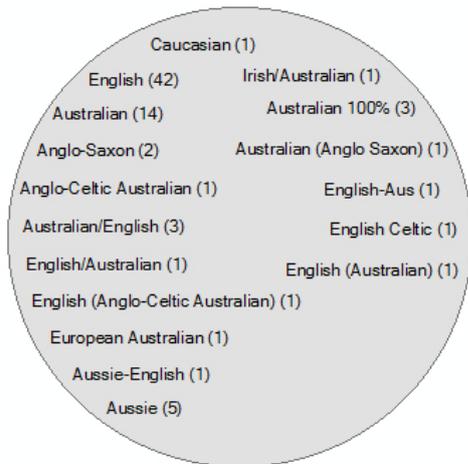
ANOVA

In order to find the differences on the neighbourhood environment scores between the three cultural groups, analysis of variance was performed. As there are low correlations between the four neighbourhood environment factors, it was not suitable to run Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). Therefore, four separate univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run for each of the four dependent variables. In order to meet the assumptions for ANOVA, 14 univariate outliers (Pallant, 2007) were deleted (no multivariate outliers were identified). After that, there were 147 cases remaining in the data set.

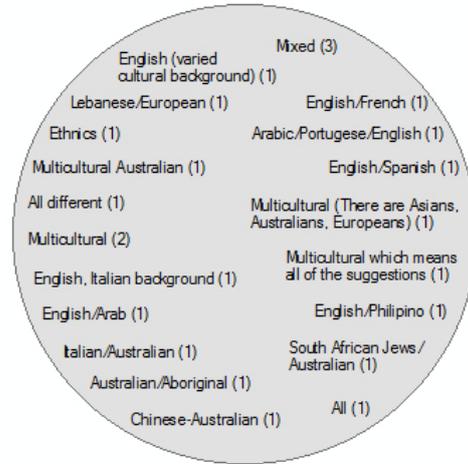
The mean score on the Vegetation & Facilities was significantly different between the cultural groups ($p < .05$). Children from Heritage cultural group recorded significantly lower score (2.90) than the Australian cultural group (3.73) ($p < .05$) and Biculturalism group (4.20) ($p < .05$). More specifically, significant difference was found on the item 'the vegetation in my neighbourhood is good' ($p < .05$) and 'my neighbourhood has sports and exercise facilities' ($p < .05$). Adolescents from Heritage cultural group reported significantly lower score on 'the vegetation in my neighbourhood is good' than Biculturalism group ($p < .05$); and significantly lower score on 'my neighbourhood has sports and exercise facilities' than Australian cultural group ($p < .05$).

No significant difference was found on the mean score of Location & Convenience between the three cultural groups. However, children from Australian cultural identity group recorded higher score (5.27) than other two cultural groups (4.36 and 4.66) (Table 2). An ANOVA inspection on each of the four items in this factor did not reveal any significant differences between groups. Similar patterns can be found in the other two neighbourhood environment factors: Neighbours and Route to School, in that although no significant difference on the mean score was found, adolescents from Australian cultural group scored higher than the other two groups (Table 1).

Australian Cultural Identity (80; 49.7%)



Biculturalism (23; 14.2%)



Heritage Cultural Identity (58; 36.0%)

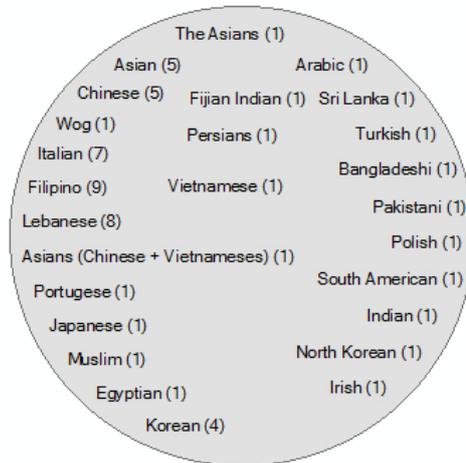


Figure 1: Respondents were divided into three cultural groups

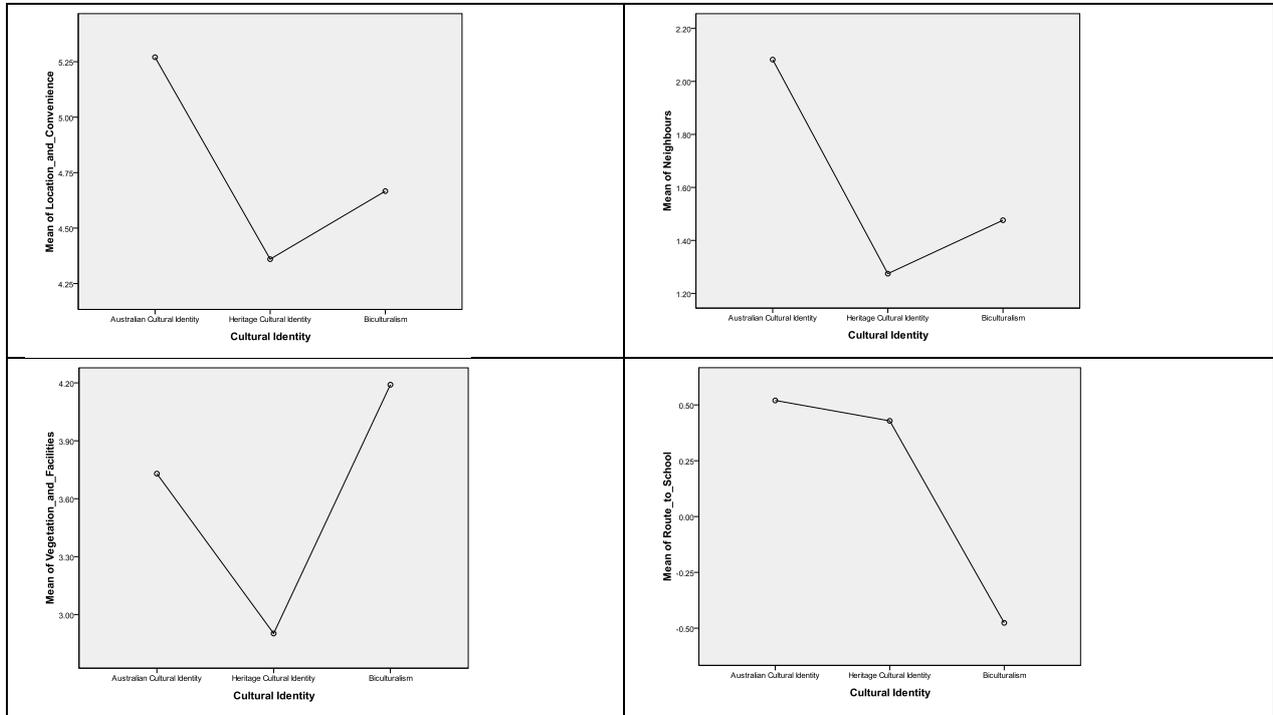
DISCUSSION

This study has two major findings. First, Australia is a multicultural society and adolescents in Australia identified themselves as coming from a variety of cultural backgrounds. The 166 respondents of this study provided 67 different answers on the question ‘cultural background’. Among the respondents, 80 (48.2%) identified themselves as Australians (English, Australia, Aussie, English Australian, etc); 58 (35.0%) identified themselves as coming from a specific ethnic group (Asian, Chinese, Italian, etc); and 23 (13.9%) identified themselves as Australian of a specific cultural background (e.g., Australian/Aboriginal, Chinese Australian, English/Arab, etc).

No significant difference was found on the two most important neighbourhood environment factors: Location & Convenience, and Neighbours. This finding is consistent with the literature, in that the overall wellbeing of immigrant children and young people in Australia is

satisfactory (Katz & Redmond, 2010). In addition, no significant difference was found on the factor Route to School, which might suggest the overall satisfactory condition of Australian suburbs.

Table 1: Means plot showing cultural differences on the four neighbourhood environment factors



However, Adolescents from Heritage cultural group scored significantly lower on the factor Vegetation & Facilities and they reported significantly lower score on the item ‘the vegetation in my neighbourhood is good’ and ‘my neighbourhood has sports and exercise facilities’. In addition, although the difference was not significant, adolescents from Australian cultural identity group scored higher than Heritage cultural identity groups on all of the neighbourhood environment factors. This finding suggests that certain degrees of power and spatial inequity between main-stream cultural groups and ethnic minority groups still exist in Australia.

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