

## **A qualitative study in the ethnic identification processes of HAKKA people in Hong Kong: The role of family socialization among generations of HAKKA**

Winnie K.L. Leung

### *Abstract*

This study, dealing with the evolution of Hakka ethnicity in Hong Kong, explores the responses of Hakka interviewees from four generations of Hakka. Differences existed between these generations as a result of a change in socialization, which was connected to a change in the economic structure of Hong Kong, leading Hakka people to slip away from their village environment to the city; this had a profound effect on family and social networks that play a major part in defining Hakka ethnicity. By looking at socialization effects on language, behavioral qualities and the celebration of Hakka culture at traditional festivals, it is hoped that this thesis will shed light on Berry's acculturation model, which only serves to show that the dominant culture or the culture of origin is either fully rejected or fully retained. In the case of this study on the Hakka, Berry's argument falls short for the Hakka people have adopted a strategy, wherein they have only modified, rather than retaining or rejecting, their own culture in the light of changing circumstances.

### **Introduction**

In nineteenth-century Hong Kong, the majority of indigenous peoples comprised either Hakka (客家) or Punti (本地). Hakka, whose origins stem from Northern China are unique in their culture and dialect, despite being a major branch of the Han ethnic group. After the start of the twentieth-century, the influence of Hakka culture in Hong Kong appears to have gradually diminished as a consequence of an influx of Chinese refugees entering the region, which has thereby led to a change in the education language policy and, the transformation of Hong Kong into a metropolis. Cultural factors such as this have meant that speakers of Hakka in Hong Kong have greatly reduced in number. However, in more recent times, there has been a growing desire to preserve Hakka culture, exemplified by Hakka organizations such as the Hakka World Conference, which is acquiring an ever-growing economic influence and political status. The influence of Hakka organizations suggest that Hakka culture is creating and reinventing a new form of identity, which will thus inevitably lead to a change in the ethnic identification process of Hakka people. By using the approach of constructivist grounded theory, this present study aims to shed light on changes in the ethnic identification process of Hakka people in Hong Kong and focus on four different generations of Hakka people. It is hoped that this study will offer valuable insights into the credibility of Berry's model of acculturation and generate useful knowledge in developing strategies to foster the bicultural competence of Hakka people in future.

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Origin and Development of Hakka Culture in Hong Kong***

Hakka (客家), which translates literally as "guest", corresponds to a major branch of the Han ethnic group and is unique in both culture and dialect (Zhou 2007). The ancestors of the Hakka people have their origins in Northern China, but due to both

internal social unrest and external invasions occurring since the Jin Dynasty, the Hakka have experienced waves of migrations to the South of China. This history of migration shapes their distinctiveness as a culture and dialect. Also, as a result of this constant need to adapt to migration, a “strong patriarchal clan and sophisticated clan” structure is a characteristic of the culture of the Hakka people (Zhou 2007). In order to maintain ethnic identity and attachment, the Hakka people have adopted such strategies as amending pedigrees, combining clan organizations and building ancestral temples (Zhou 2007). Moreover, ancestral worship is important to Hakka culture, with highly sophisticated sacrificial ceremonies and rituals being regularly practiced. Thus, as a consequence of their migratory past, Hakka people developed a strong feeling of *communitas* in order to establish settlements after migration.

When Hong Kong was colonized by the British in the nineteenth century, the majority of indigenous people consisted of two groups, Punti (本地) and Hakka (Lau 2005). At that time, Punti and Hakka were two distinct ethnic groups; Punti arrived in Hong Kong around the eleventh century, whereas Hakka arrived some centuries later. Therefore, Punti people occupied the most fertile land, while the Hakka inhabited only hillside areas, some coastal strips and valley regions. Moreover, the Punti dialect was closely related to Cantonese, while the Hakka’s was not. Perhaps as a consequence of such differences, numerous conflicts arose between the Punti and the Hakka and as noted by Zhou (2007), some Punti people even derogatorily referred the Hakka to as “fierce-looking Hakkas”, “Hakka thieves” or “people of degenerated and barbarian tribes”.

Since the nineteenth-century, Hakka culture in Hong Kong has been threatened by three social factors (migration of mainland Chinese, a change in language policy and a change in occupations), two of which reduced the Hakka to a minority group, and all three having a significant impact on the cultural definition of the Hakka. First, in the 1950s, many refugees migrated to Hong Kong from mainland China and many of them moved to the New Territories, where Hakka people also resided. Hence, the Hakka became a minority in the residential areas where they had formed the majority. Second, a change in education policy forbade Hakka children from being taught the Hakka dialect; Cantonese thus became the dominant Chinese dialect in Hong Kong. Third, since the 1970s, Hong Kong has been developing into a metropolis and this has meant that many of the Hakka have had to adapt to occupations such as working as laborers, drivers and teachers, instead of maintaining the traditional agricultural professions they once held. Inevitably, this has had a dramatic effect on the lifestyle of Hakka people. Added to this, the geographic barriers between Hakka villages and urban areas have been dissolved through the construction of roads, impacting upon the lifestyle within these villages and allowing more access to cities.

At an initial glance, Hakka culture appears to be disappearing in Hong Kong, in that, as Lau (2005) reports, no child under the age of twelve in Hong Kong can speak Hakka. However, there is evidence of an ever-growing interest in Hakka culture, as exemplified by the World Hakka Conference, which involve Hakka representatives from numerous countries around the world. The World Hakka Conference is steadily growing in standard and scale (Zhou 2007). Each meeting includes trade talks that generate a monetary wealth of tens of billions of dollars and the attention from political leaders worldwide has been increasing. According to Zhou (2007), the World Hakka Conference has, in this era of globalization, transformed from simply being a “grand reunion and association” to a platform for “pluralistic ethnic group identification and cultural production”. The World Hakka Conference is an example to

illustrate just how Hakka ethnic group identification has become economically and politically significant. In terms of the economic benefits, identification with the Hakka group has motivated wealthy Hakka businessmen to invest in Hakka-related projects and trade with other Hakka people. On a political scale, identification with the Hakka group promotes a sense of unification among Hakka people around the globe. As a result, creations and reinventions of different forms of Hakka culture with unique regional characteristics have emerged, as emblemized by numerous Hakka cultural festivals, which have evolved from the efforts of various political and cultural leaders. It appears that Hakka culture in Hong Kong is not disappearing, but as shown by the World Hakka Conference, is part of a larger phenomenon occurring in the definition of Hakka culture, which is creating and reinventing tradition and forming a new type of ethnic identity.

### ***Ethic identity and Socialization Theory***

According to Phinney (1991), ethnic identity is defined as the degree to which an individual's sense of feeling, attitude, knowledge, and behaviors are engaged with his or her cultural heritage. Furthermore, Ferrera (2011) also adds that ethnic identity involves:

self-identifying with one's racial/ethnic group members; being involved in ethnic practices; proudly and positively viewing one's racial/ethnic group; and being interested in, knowledgeable about, and committed to the group. (Ferrera 2011)

A person's ethnic identity can be shaped by socialization. Traditionally, social learning can be perceived as one channel of socialization that transmits the core values of an ethnic group to its ethnic people. Children acquire, with the involvement of parents, their own specific cultural characteristics, for instance, cultural social norms, roles, beliefs and communication patterns. Therefore, social learning is essential in that it leads to the development of ethnic identity over successive generations, which in turn, will impact upon the formation of ethnicity. Moreover, the "social networking tie" is important to the operation of socialization, wherein family relationships (parent and child) and social networking (neighborhood relationships) serves as one way of shaping an individual's cultural behaviors. In an article by Caitlin and Karen (2003), cultural behavior is discussed as a reflection of cultural skills, where skills pertain to whether an individual is able to speak and read the language as well as possessing the willingness to participate the ethnic group activities. Therefore, the transmission of cultural behavior can be acquired through the involvement of parents during the stages of childhood and also of interacting with peers, since the parent and the neighborhood are considered to serve both primary and active roles in shaping and transmitting ethnic identity (Caitlin and Karen 2003).

### ***Acculturation and Enculturation***

Acculturation and enculturation are two processes for which people from a non-dominant cultural group, who live in an environment with another dominant mainstream culture, are bound to undergo. Acculturation is a social learning process, wherein people of an ethnic minority *adapt* to a dominant culture by transforming their own set of beliefs, value systems and behaviors (Berry, *et al.* 2006). Enculturation is another social learning process, but in this case, people *acquire* the corresponding beliefs, values and behaviors of the dominant culture (Roosa, *et al.* 2002). An individual's cultural orientation is determined by the simultaneous occurrence of, and interaction between, the processes of acculturation and

enculturation. Enculturation is particularly challenging for children from a non-dominant cultural group, for cultural heritage would primarily be acquired from their immediate families and the ethno-cultural networks to which they belong; this does not pose a problem for the children of a dominant cultural group (Park 2007).

As noted by Weinreich (2009), Berry's model of acculturation (Berry 1980, 1997, 2003, Berry, *et al.* 1989), with its four different acculturation strategies is a highly influential model in academia today. The first strategy that Berry's model notes is the "integration" strategy; this involves a balance of both accepting of the dominant culture and yet, retaining the culture of origin. The "integration" strategy is widely believed to be the most beneficial strategy in establishing bicultural competence. The second strategy is "assimilation", which involves full acceptance of the dominant culture, but a rejection of the culture of origin. Inevitably, "assimilation" strategy results in an alienation of cultural roots and the difficulty of being accepted by those who belong to the cultural group of origin. In contrast to "assimilation" is "separation" that involves rejecting most aspects of the dominant culture, whilst retaining the culture of origin. The final strategy cited by Berry is known as "marginalization" and this involves a rejection of both the dominant culture and the own culture of origin. Needless to say, this is the worst strategy in establishing bicultural relations, for it alienates a person outright, leaving them disconnected from both the dominant culture and the culture of origin.

### **Objectives of the Present Study**

Although research conducted on the Hakka have provided valuable insights into the changes in the ethnic identification process of the people, relatively few studies have shed light on the specific situation of this minority group in Hong Kong. This study intends to fill such a gap, with the object of exploring the ethnic identity development of Hakka people in Hong Kong. Specifically, this study aims to investigate differences between the ethnic identification processes of Hakka people from different generations through the socialization of parents and peers.

Traditionally, Hakka strengthen bonds among themselves through the worship activities of villagers and most Hakka associations appear in the form of deity associations, charitable associations and literary societies (Zhou 2007). However, such traditional tools of establishing Hakka group identification appear to be reducing in significance in Hong Kong, as a consequence of changes in the social structure of the people; even the linguistic significance of the Hakka dialect in Hong Kong has greatly diminished. In contrast, the economic and political influence of such Hakka organizations as the World Hakka Conference is ever-growing. It appears that in this globalizing era, ethnic identity development of Hakka people has evolved, with less dependence on common dialects and deities, and more on potential economic and political benefits. For example, creations and reinventions of different forms of Hakka culture with unique regional characteristics, such as Hakka cultural festivals evolved with the effort of political and cultural leaders in different countries. Therefore, this study will ascertain whether such Hakka ethnicity situations are founded or not.

### **Conceptualization and Operationalization**

In Weinreich's opinion (2009), a person's identity is conceptualized as:

the totality of one's self construal, in which how one construes oneself in the present expresses the continuity between how one construes oneself as one was in the past and how one construes oneself as one aspires to be in the future.

Weinreich goes on to differentiate a person's identity with that of a person's ethnic identity:

that part of the totality of one's self-construal made up of those dimensions that express the continuity between one's construal of past ancestry and one's future aspirations in relation to ethnicity (Weinreich 2009).

Taking Weinreich's observations into account, the present study proposes that a Hakka's ethnic identity is operationalized through his/her own identification with the Hakka group. The formation of ethnic identity is based on one's sense of self as part of an ethnic group (Bernal, *et al.* 1993). In other words, the Hakka ethnic identification process is operationalized as one through which an individual comes to identify themselves as belonging to the Hakka group.

### **Methodology**

A qualitative method is adopted in this present study through the use of in-depth interviews. According to Yeh, *et al.* (2005), qualitative methods are desirable for exploring complex phenomena, which enable participants to provide a greater number of possible responses in a natural context. As noted by Yeh *et al.*, increased use of qualitative methods in studying experiences of ethnic minorities is recommended by psychologists (e.g. Kim, *et al.* 2003). Open-ended questions were asked during the interviews, on the basis of the theory of constructivism, which assumes that participants construct the phenomena under study with their subjective experiences and meanings (Creswell 2003). Since this study is exploratory in nature, a grounded theory approach is adopted. Thus, the data will 'offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action' (Strauss and Crobin 1998, p.12). It is hoped that the application of these approaches will thus facilitate a more natural setting to allow participants to reveal how they make sense of their ethnic identification processes, in terms of their present and past social experiences.

### **Sampling**

Since the study intends to investigate changes in the identification processes of Hakka in Hong Kong, the scope of the sampling encompassed participants whose ages ranges from 20 and above, respectively categorized into four age groups: 1) 20 to 39, 2) 40 to 59, 3) 60 to 79 and 4) 80 and above. Given that the goal of qualitative research is not to produce generalizations (Glesne 1999, Creswell 2003), the number of participants was limited to four, with at least one respondent for each age group, therein covering four generations of Hakka people. In addition, for the purposes of this study, the age group (20-39) represented the younger Hakka generation, that is, the fourth Hakka generation; the age group (40-59) represented the late-middle Hakka generation, that is the third Hakka generation; the age group (60-79) represented the middle Hakka generation, that is, the second Hakka generation, and the last age group (80 and above) represented the oldest Hakka generation, that is the first Hakka generation.

Open sampling techniques were used with the help of a Hakka informant, who was selected from amongst my friends, and from there, the study involved any suitable Hakka person who was willing to participate. Participants were then invited to introduce their Hakka friends or family members to participate in the study, thus broadening the scope of the research to encompass further viewpoints.

### **Data Collection**

Before the interview process commenced, the purposes of this study, as well as the procedures for the interview, were explained to the participants. After obtaining the informed consent of the participant, face-to-face, in-depth interviews were conducted within the participant's home, as this was suitable and convenient for the respondent and the interviewer and was also more conducive for expressing personal information. As Marshall and Rossman (1999) observed, the use of in-depth interviews is permissible when the study aims to understand participants' subjective experience. Moreover, each interview was audiotaped and lasted for about 30-45 minutes.

Since a fundamental aspect of culture corresponds to a specific set of beliefs, values and behavior (Kim, *et al.* 2003), the open-ended questions of the interview focused on these three factors:

- a) "Do you identify yourself with Hakka culture?"
- b) "Can you speak or understand the Hakka dialect?"
- c) "Can you talk about the beliefs, values and behaviors in the Hakka culture?"
- d) "Do you possess these beliefs, values and behaviors yourself?"
- e) "How did you come to acquire these beliefs, values and behaviors?"
- f) "Are you proud to be a member of the Hakka group?"
- g) "Are you a member of any Hakka association?"
- h) "Recall the last Hakka activity in which you participated."
- i) "Do you have more Hakka friends than non-Hakka friends?"
- j) "Do you favor Hakka food over non-Hakka food?"
- k) "Are you more willing to trade with Hakka businessmen than non-Hakka businessmen?"

Depending on the situation, more specific questions were prepared to probe further the responses of the participants. The details and the full-version of the questions are listed in Appendix A. For the convenience of further analysis for this present study and the attempt at rendering sincerity, the interviews were conducted and transcribed in Chinese, the main language of the interviewer.

### **Data analysis**

In qualitative research, data analysis may proceed concurrently with data collection (Attinasi 1992, Marshall and Rossman 1999) and this present study utilized the guidelines for coding and data analysis as recommended by Glesne (1999) and Tesch (1990). Tesch's (1990) idea that the continuation of redefining categories and creating categories in light of new data (Tesch 1990) was also important to the process of data analysis in this study, thus: 1) the interview was transcribed in Chinese; 2) the interview transcriptions were reviewed in order to identify potential categories to further code specific sub-themes; 3) under each category, several sub-themes were coded accordingly and 4) each category and the relevant sub-themes were highlighted separately.

### Conceptual Framework



Figure 1. Input and Output model of Socialization, Acculturation and Ethnic identity.

Taking into account the literature review already discussed, a conceptual framework was developed in line with Figure 1, comprising three components, socialization, acculturation and ethnic identity. This figure also includes ideas previously discussed, wherein socialization is defined as the interaction between family and peer, while the experience of acculturation combined with enculturation, is theorized into four factors: (1) integration (2) assimilation (3) separation and (4) marginalization. In looking at this input and output model, it may be assumed that one's ethnic identification is the final product that results from the level in which input (socialization) and process (acculturation) proceed.

### Results

To follow from the data analysis, this study focused on the ethnic identity and acculturation of the Hakka through three themes: (1) behavioral characteristics (2) language ability and (3) social participation. The purpose of focusing on these concepts is that they will lead to a deeper understanding of cultural adaptation for the Hakka in Hong Kong. Each of the three concepts will be discussed in detail below, but it is important to note that these themes are also divided into subgroups that will also affect the discussion of their particular characteristics later. Behavioral characteristics are further categorized into another four sub-themes: 1) the ability to create cohesion, 2) work ethic (hard-working or otherwise), 3) attitude to money (thriftiness) and 4) hospitality. Furthermore, the theme of language ability is categorized into two sub-themes which included either the ability to speak the Hakka language or the ability to listen to the Hakka language. Finally, social participation is also classed into another set of three sub-themes: 1) participation in the ritual celebrations of the Ching-Ming Festival, 2) participation in the ritual celebrations marking Chinese Lunar New Year and 3) participation in rituals that celebrate weddings.

#### ***Hakka behavioral characteristics: Cohesiveness***

According to Robbins and Judge (2010), cohesion refers to the degree to which "group members are attracted to each other and are motivated to stay in the group and across the culture." Behavior implying social cohesion was a characteristic found among the four generations of participants within this survey. Most of the interview respondents described Hakka people as being strongly aware of group cohesiveness, especially in the older days of living in the Hakka village. Cohesiveness proved to be an important trait in the past, since the Hakka people lived in the mountain sides where the environment was fraught with dangers from robbers from mainland China. Thus, the Hakka tended to bond cohesively for the sake of protection, as evident in the interview testimonies below:

Respondent A, first generation (age range: 80+): In the past we needed to be cohesive because we lived near the mountains where many thieves walked in from mainland China to rob our properties.

Respondent B, second generation (age range: 60-79): Hakka people in the past were more cohesive. Indeed, in comparison to now, all of us were more cohesive. People in the past were cohesive because we would have stood out if one of us got into trouble or were being bullied by others.

Respondent C, third generation, (age range: 40-49): We have to be cohesive because my dad taught us that we ought to support our family members if they are being bullied by people.

Respondent D, fourth generation (age range: 20-39): I remember hearing that my mum said that the Hakka people were very cohesive. People in the past were more cohesive than nowadays because villagers would greet each other after they finished work. Moreover, whenever a jubilant event happened, for example, when a baby was born, they would sit together to eat” Pun Chai”.

From these quotes, it can be observed that a perception of cohesiveness was evident for the first and second generations of Hakka people since they lived in small villages. Hence, members of Hakka people spent a great deal of time together and had a high degree of contact, which facilitated group interaction and a strong feeling of neighborhood. Consequently, they banded together to fight against external threats and fostered peaceful relationships between each other. However, for the third and fourth generations of Hakka people, who transferred from the village setting to the modern city in order to seek better living opportunities, the sense of cohesiveness is but a memory passed on from parents as opposed to being an experience.

#### ***Hakka behavioral characteristics: Hard-working***

Another notable behavioral feature of the Hakka people is their diligence, their ability to work hard, although this appeared to be a most evident characteristic with the first generation more so than the others. It is believed that the reasons for why the first generation appeared more hard-working lay in the fact that they lived in a village. Thus, their occupations were mostly limited to farming and subsistence living, as very few entered into the business and working classes. Moreover, the rigor of a farming life had to be balanced with the responsibilities of family and taking care of grandparents and children. Survival posed a challenge for the Hakka of the first generation and they were required to acquire traits such as assiduousness.

Respondent A, first generation (age range: 80+): In the past, Hakka people were very painstakingly hard-working. Hakka people could do everything; we could plant vegetables for both the family and to sell in the market. Also, when we were young, we need to take care of the children and look after the elderly.

#### ***Hakka behavioral characteristics: Thriftiness***

In a similar response to the challenging economic conditions of the past, Hakka people appear to be quite thrifty in nature. Thriftiness prevailed in the first and second generations of Hakka people, as opposed to the third and fourth Hakka generations who migrated from the village environment to seek the rapidly developing economic rewards of the city. For the people of the first and second generations, the living style of the village environment was a lot less complex due to lack of choice, but their low

incomes made them financially prudent.

Respondent A, first generation (age range: 80+): We are so poor because we do not have enough money. In the past, we were not like you in that you have a variety of choices of food nowadays. We lacked money and did not always have a fresh meal for every dinner, therefore, we would buy salted fish or salt the fresh fish and fresh vegetables, which would last enough for 3 days. Hakka people are very thrifty; we plant vegetables for self-use and to sell in the market; any surplus would be again exchanged for money or to buy a meal for the family.

Respondent B, second generation (age range: 60-79): If I look back at the past living conditions of our people, we were thrifty because our incomes were very low.

### ***Hakka behavioral characteristics: Hospitable***

An attitude of hospitality is apparent among the Hakka people. For respondent D (fourth generation), whose family migrated to a city environment in a neighborhood of non-Hakka people, her mother maintained a high degree of hospitality, distributing freshly-made traditional Hakka food to neighbors. Such an observation exemplifies that in spite of the changed environment, Hakka people were attempting to maintain the core values of their culture.

Respondent D, fourth generation (age range: 20-39): Hakka people like making dishes like “Cha Gor”, which is a traditional Hakka dish made from some special leaf, and this we distributed to people. We just wanted to share our food with others and did not expect money in return.

### ***Language Ability***

As previously discussed, the most direct agents of socialization, such as parental influence and social networking, transmit ethnic identification. Acquiring language ability can be gained from interacting with family members and exposure to the neighborhood, determining such factors as to whether a Hakka person would be able to speak the Hakka language or possess the ability to listen to the Hakka language. Therefore, Hakka ethnicity is in part grounded on the ability to be able to communicate in the language. From the interview extracts below, it may be assumed that the more interaction with social agencies, the better the language proficiency and in turn, a stronger definition of one’s Hakka identity.

Respondent A, first generation (age range 80+): When I was young, my mother, father and their siblings all communicated in Hakka. Therefore, there was no problem for me to speak and listen to the Hakka language. I can speak the Hakka language fluently and listen to the Hakka language.

Respondent B, third generation (age range: 60-79): Yes, I am able to speak the Hakka language fluently and also am able to listen to Hakka language.

Respondent C, second generation (age range: 40-59): I can just speak little bits of Hakka language because my father seldom spoke Hakka language to us but he spoke Hakka language to his friends so I have no problem in listening to the Hakka language.

Respondent D, fourth generation (age range: 20-39): I cannot speak the Hakka language but I am able to listen to the Hakka language being spoken. This is because my mother communicated with relatives by speaking Hakka when I was young. As I heard their conversations frequently, I can listen to the Hakka language.

A marked decline in language ability is observable between the four generations of the Hakka, with proficiency being at its highest level only with the first and second generations. Older Hakka generations were both able to speak and listened to the Hakka language with fluency, whereas the third and fourth generations found difficulty in speaking, yet were able to listen. Noticeably, differences in language proficiency can be explained in two ways: 1) parental guidance and 2) the environment to which the respondent is exposed. Both these factors are interrelated and yet, the respondents of the first and second generations, implying that the language abilities of the respondents were honed from engaging with both the parent and the neighbor alike. For the first and second Hakka generations, the Hakka language served as the main language of communication for the entire neighborhood and the home environment, and consequently, both respondents were able to speak and listen to Hakka language. This is not the case, however for the third and fourth generations, where a noticeable decline in language proficiency may be observed from the statements of these respondents. These two generations claimed that parents seldom communicated with them by speaking Hakka language. In some respects, direct parental communication plays a part in developing skills, while the skill of listening appears to be honed by witnessing interaction with neighbors. For the third and fourth generations language ability is significantly diminished and in turn, the ethnic identification of being Hakka.

#### ***Ethnic participation: traditional holiday celebrations***

All generations shared the view that participation in traditional ceremonial events is essential in defining ethnicity. The most important events for the Hakka included the Ching-Ming Festival, celebrations for Chinese Lunar New Year and weddings. Each event is celebrated in a distinctive way with specific activities associated to particular celebrations, for example mascot dancing (“Ki Lun”), and dragon dancing will be celebrated for both Chinese Lunar New Year and marriage celebrations. Moreover, it has been previously noted that worshipping ancestors is important for the Hakka, especially evident during the Ching-Ming Festival.

Respondent A, first generation (age range: 80+): We will dance with “Ki Lun”, which is a mascot dance that spreads the wishes to a newly married couple and their family. Similarly, “Ki Lun” will also be danced by each Hakka family as part of celebrating the happiness of New Year.

Respondent B, second generation (age range: 60-79): Together with several families, the great-ancestors will be worshiped every five years, while other ancestors will be worshiped once a year by our family. On the one hand, every 10 years, most of us will go to Lam Village and attend “Tai Chu”, which is a big worshipping activity that aims at gathering all of the Hakka people together in order to strengthen our relationships with each other.

Respondent C, third generation (age range: 40-59): Among all of the traditional Hakka events, I like the Chinese New Year the most. Everyone can participate in the dragon dancing, visit the entire family in the village and also get a red bag.

Respondent D, fourth generation (age range: 20-39): My mother and I will go back to our Hakka village to attend the “Pun Choi dinner” and at the same time, we can contact our relatives.

Events such as the Ching-Ming Festival, the Chinese Lunar Year celebrations and also marriage celebrations have an important function in fostering a stronger feeling

of *communitas*. No matter whether you are a Hakka person living in a village or in a town centre, both groups would merge to attend such social events. As each of the above participants' record, these events retain traditions important to the culture, such as eating traditional Hakka foods, enjoying Hakka-specific cultural activities. In this way, such ceremonial events serve a role of connecting the people together and therein, intensifying a sense of Hakka ethnicity.

### **Discussion**

The majority of academic literature connected with the Hakka has dealt primarily with the core values of the people as opposed to focusing on the development of the ethnic identity of the Hakka. This study has thus attempted to fill this research gap by specifically referring to the Hakka of Hong Kong. A look at the generational differences of socialization (family and social networking) has led to the conclusion that ethnic identification for the Hakka of Hong Kong have altered. Indeed, these two factors were the main agents in shaping ethnic identification for the first and second generations. For the older generations of Hakka, the Hakka language was the only mode of daily communication between parents and the community as a whole. In addition, villages were tight clusters pervaded by a strong sense of community, which further aided in strengthening language communication. However, for the third and fourth generations of Hakka people, ties among neighborhood decreased as people relocated to the city in search of better living conditions. As a consequence, the language abilities of the younger generations of Hakka to speak Hakka diminished. Moreover, the social networks surrounding the later generations of Hakka in the city predominately comprise non-Hakka people, who were speaking Cantonese, a language not closely related to Hakka. This shift to non-Hakka neighborhoods for the second generation Hakka parent involved adjusting to, or in some cases discarding the Hakka language in preference to Cantonese in order to socialize with their children and allow their children to socialize. Therefore, the loss of community established by the tight threshold of the village environment, combined with a preference for speaking Cantonese, has led to a marked difference in the proficiency of Hakka speakers from that of the fourth and first generations.

Furthermore, the concepts of cohesiveness, hard work and thriftiness were found to be prevalent behavioral characteristics (demeanor) of the first and second generations of Hakka people. These characteristics, no doubt, have to do with the geographic and economic conditions of the past; cohesion was cemented from a need to be protected; hard work resulted from the agricultural lifestyle; and thriftiness came as a consequence of low income. These three behavioral qualities were important also to the later generations, but took a different form due to the city lifestyle; for instance, cohesion was created more with the family unit in mind, rather than encompassing the neighborhood.

Although language ability and the behavioral qualities of cohesion, hard-work and thriftiness differ from generation to generation, one aspect, the desire to participate in traditional events, is important to all generations. At the moments of ceremonial celebration, all generations of Hakka would take part and respect customs specific to their culture, thereby illustrating a form of ethnic identification.

Berry's model of acculturation specifically involves a direct rejection and retention of either the dominant culture or the culture of origin, while this study demonstrates that the Hakka have employed a different strategy that may place Berry's model in a different light; namely, that the Hakka have only modified their culture, neither fully retaining their cultural origins nor outrightly rejecting them.

For example, though the later generations of Hakka have predominantly been surrounded by Cantonese-speaking communities, the family unit perseveres in communicating in Hakka. Similarly, although many of the Hakka have shifted to the city, they do return to the Hakka villages in order to attend traditional festival events. Such language practices and social participation appear to challenge Berry's acculturation model.

This study lies in contrast to previous arguments that claim that ethnic identification of the Hakka has occurred through the efforts of political and cultural leaders. Instead, the argument of this study that ethnic identification has evolved due to migration from village to city, may be influenced by the fact that the participants were not members of Hakka associations, such as Hong Kong Tsung Tsin Association, thus lending a less political perspective on the matter. Overall, it is hoped that the observations and conclusions on the generational differences of family socialization in this study has shed new light on the evolution of ethnic identification of the Hakka in Hong Kong, and with its findings, can set the path for conducting further research in this area.

### **Limitations**

Although the present study has successfully revealed three core characteristics of Hakka people, namely, (1) behavioral qualities of cohesiveness, hard-working, thriftiness, hospitality, (2) language ability and (3) ethnic participation of traditional holiday celebrations, this study has three limitations. First of all, due to constraints of time and resources, only four Hakka participants were involved in this study. The small number of participants may undermine the generalizability of the findings of this study. Although there is no stipulated rule regarding the minimum number of participants involved in a qualitative research study, ideally speaking, researchers should try to reach a 'saturation point' when no more new opinion or idea could find among the respondents. Second, the information provided by the Hakka participant who was aged over 80 was not as juicy as the other three Hakka participants. The elder Hakka lady forgot a lot of her past memories, and even when she did not, retrieval of the memories cost her much time and effort. Finally, no respondent involved in this study was a member of any Hakka Association. Therefore, this study could not provide any information on the Hakka identification processes through political and cultural leaders. In light of these shortcomings, the following suggestions are recommended for future studies. First of all, future studies in this topic are recommended to involve more respondents to enhance the generalizability of the findings. For example, in order to deepen the understandings of changes in Hakka core values, both Hakka people who live in old villages and those who live in urban areas can be involved and compared. Second, for the respondents who are aged over 70, focus group interview strategy is recommended to replace the in-depth interview, so that different group members can help stimulate each other's memories. Finally, inclusion of participants who are members of Hakka Association is recommended.

### **Further Research**

Findings from this study shed light on the role of only one factor in Hakka identification process, that is, socialization. In future, researchers can explore the roles of other factors in Hakka identity development, such as social cohesion. Social cohesion, generally speaking, is a concept which consists of several sub-dimensions, including (1) common values and civic culture (2) social network (3) social control and (4) social solidarity in which these elements are interrelated contributing on the

ethnicity identification (Jenson 2002). The present study suggests that different Hakka generations may develop their Hakka identities through different processes. Future studies can investigate into the relationship between social cohesion and Hakka identification by addressing such questions as whether the intensity of social cohesion among different Hakka generations may have different effects on its ethnicity identification formation. The present study also suggests that the ties among Hakka people who live in villages and urban areas are very different. Therefore, future studies on Hakka identity development are recommended to involve two groups of Hakka people, one living in old villages and one living in urban areas. This may provide us with a deeper understanding of the mechanisms by which Hakka people, across different generations and different residential areas in Hong Kong, develop their ethnic identities

### **Acknowledgement**

Over the two years I have been undergraduate at City University of Hong Kong, I am grateful to have been educated by many professionals, who with a passion for their respective subjects, have guided me. These people deserve acknowledgment for the completion of this final year project.

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge my supervisor Dr. Jacky Chau-kiu Cheung who has given me useful comments. Dr. Cheung, thank you for helping to narrow the topic of this thesis and providing advice on relevant journal articles to read. Moreover, I am grateful for your encouragement, stimulating me in a direction that was more academically rigorous.

I wish to acknowledge my family who has supported me without reservation. Without your caring attitude, I would not be the person that I have grown to be. Your belief in me and your positive attitude throughout my Bachelor degree has supported me through the challenges that I have faced in this journey.

Finally, I wish to thank my friends who have assisted me during the writing of this thesis. Your feedback was ever full of clarity and sincerity.

Thank you to all of the above!

### **Biographic note**

Miss Winnie K.L. Leung is the 2012 graduate of the Bachelor of Social Sciences (Honours) in Applied Sociology at the City University of Hong Kong. Her email address is [l\\_winnie@hotmail.com](mailto:l_winnie@hotmail.com).

### **References**

- Andrade, M. S., 2007. International student persistence: Integration or cultural integrity? *Journal of College Student Retention*, 8, 57-81.
- Attinasi, L. C., 1992. Rethinking the study of the outcomes of college attendance. *Journal of College Student Development*, 33(1), 61-70.
- Bernal, M.E., et al. 1993. Development of Mexican American identity. In: M.E. Bernal and G.P. Knight, eds. *Ethnic Identity: Formation and transmission among Hispanics and other minorities*. Albany: SUNY Press, 31-46.
- Berry, J. W., 1980. Social and cultural change. In: Triandis, H. C. and Brislin, R.W, eds. *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology: Social Psychology*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 211– 279.
- Berry, J. W., 1997. Integration, acculturation and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 46, 5–34.
- Berry, J. W., 2003. Conceptual approaches to acculturation. In: K. M. Chun, et al., eds. *Immigrant youth: Acculturation, identity, and adaptation*. Applied Psychology, An International Review, 55, 302–332.
- Caitlin, K. and Karen, A. H., 2003. The role of the parents in the maintenance of second generation Vietnamese cultural behaviors, *Sociological Spectrum*, 23 (2), 213-245.
- Carter, P. L., 2003. “Black” cultural capital, status positioning, and schooling conflicts for low-income African American Youth. *Social Problems*, 50, 136-155.
- Creswell, J. W., 2003. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*

- (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ferrera, M. J., 2011. *The intersection of colonial mentality, family socialization, and ethnic identity formation among second generation Filipino-American youth*. The University of Chicago.
- Glesne, C., 1999. *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Jenson, J., 2002. Identifying the links: Social cohesion and culture [CIRCLE-CCRN round table 2000]. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 27(2), 141-151.
- Kim, B. S. K., et al., 2003. A qualitative study of adaptation experiences of 1.5-generation Asian Americans. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 9, 156-170.
- Kumar, A. and Nevid, J. S., 2010. Acculturation, enculturation, and perceptions of mental disorders in Asian Indian immigrants. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 16, 274-283.
- Lau, C. F., 2005. A dialect murders another dialect: the case of Hakka in Hong Kong. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 173, 23-35.
- Marshall, C. and Rossman, B., 1999. *Designing qualitative research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Park, I. J. K., 2007. Enculturation of Korean American adolescents within familial and cultural contexts. *Family Relations*, 56, 403-412.
- Patton, M. Q., 1990. *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Robbins, S. P. and Judge, T. A., 2010. *Organizational Behavior* (13<sup>th</sup> ed). New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Roosa, M. W., et al., 2002. Cultural/ethnic issues and the prevention scientist in the 21st century. *Prevention and Treatment*, 5, 1-13.
- Strauss, A.L. and Corbin, J., 1998. *Basics of qualitative research techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks. CA: Sage.
- Tesch, R., 1990. *Qualitative Research: Analysis Types and Software Tools*. New York: Falmer.
- Turner, V., 2005. Rituals and Communitas. *Creative Resistance*. 26 Nov. 2005
- Weinreich, P., 2009. "Enculturation," not "acculturation": Conceptualising and assessing identity processes in migrant communities. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 33, 124-139.
- Yeh, C. J., et al., 2005. The cultural negotiations of Korean Immigrant Youth. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 83, 172-182.
- Zhou, J., 2007. Hakka ethnic group identification and cultural production: An anthropological study of the world Hakka conference. *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology*, 40, 83-99.