Acculturation over time among adolescents from immigrant Chinese families

Catherine L. Costigan
University of Victoria

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Population Change and Lifecourse Strategic Knowledge Cluster
Acculturation

- Process of change, in a group or individual, that takes place when two (or more) sets of cultural influences experience ongoing contact (Berry, 1997; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboagna, & Szapocznik, 2010)
- Most often studied from perspective of individual immigrant
- Individual level: personal balance of the ethnic and new cultures
  - adapt to their new country of residence
  - maintain personally important aspects of their ethnic culture
Diverse styles of acculturation

- Some immigrant individuals immerse themselves in Canadian culture and minimize the ethnic culture in their lives.

- Others strongly maintain their ethnic traditions and values to the exclusion of adopting Canadian culture.

- Still others retain key aspects of their ethnic culture and adopt features of Canadian culture.

- Dynamic process - balance may change over the life course (though research limited).
Cultural Distance

- Greater challenge negotiating a personal balance between cultures when there is greater cultural distance

- Chinese and Canadian cultures:
  - Chinese values: parental authority, lifelong obligation to the family, respect for elders, family harmony, achievement
  - Canadian values: individuality, autonomy, asserting oneself, self-esteem
Adolescent developmental period

• Balancing Chinese and Canadian cultures may be particularly challenging for adolescents who are trying to fit in with peers and family simultaneously.
Acculturation & Mental Health

- Acculturation has been studied in relation to important adjustment outcomes

- Extensive research regarding the relationship between acculturation and mental health, but mixed results (e.g., Koneru et al., 2007; Costigan et al., 2010)
  - Benefits of heritage culture maintenance (e.g., protective effects of ethnic identity)
  - Mixed findings regarding adopting new culture
    - Cultural competency – beneficial
    - Healthy immigrant effect – detrimental
Limitations in the assessment of acculturation

- Proxy measures of acculturation such as generational status or length of residence

- Uni-dimensional measures of acculturation – assume inverse relation

- Collapsing across multiple domains or focusing on only one domain (and over-generalizing results)

- Cross-sectional data
The Current Study

- Use a bi-dimensional conceptualization of acculturation to examine how acculturation changes over time for adolescents in immigrant Chinese families.

- Focus is on the theoretical conceptualization of acculturation and basic questions about how acculturation changes.
The Intercultural Family Study

- Evaluate how acculturation experiences, family relationships, and parenting relate to cultural and psychological adjustment within Chinese Canadian immigrant families
  - acculturation
  - discrimination, acculturation stress
  - acculturation gaps, language brokering
  - parenting practices, beliefs, and expectations
  - relationship quality: parent-adolescent, coparenting
  - adolescent achievement, parenting efficacy, self-esteem, mental health
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The Intercultural Family Study

- **Eligibility Criteria**
  - Self-identify ethnicity as Chinese
  - Both parents immigrated to Canada after age 18
  - Lived in Canada for at least 2 years
  - Adolescent aged 12-17

- **Recruitment Procedures**
  - 67% randomly recruited via survey research centre
  - 33% referred (participating families)
Family Demographics

- N=182 families at Time 1

- Region of origin
  - People’s Republic of China (65.1%)
  - Taiwan (20.2%)
  - Hong Kong (14.7%)

- All but 2 families emigrated from urban areas

- 93% were 2-parent families; 89% were married before immigration
Adolescent Characteristics

- Mean age of adolescents at Time 1
  - 14.95 years (SD = 1.70)

- 52% female, 48% male

- Generational Status
  - 55% 1st generation
    - arrived after age 6
  - 45% 1.5 or 2nd generation
    - 1.5 generation: immigrated before age 6
    - Substantial overlap with newcomer vs. longer-term immigrant distinction
## Parent Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>$M = 44.66$ yrs ($SD = 4.69$)</td>
<td>$M = 47.03$ yrs ($SD = 5.67$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of residence</strong></td>
<td>$M = 10.56$ yrs ($SD = 6.53$)</td>
<td>$M = 11.01$ yrs ($SD = 7.07$)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Highest education</strong></td>
<td>High school (13.6%)</td>
<td>High school (11.2%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Vocational/college (32.7%)</td>
<td>Vocational/college (20.4%)</td>
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<td>University degree (33.3%)</td>
<td>University degree (27.2%)</td>
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<td>Graduate/profess (14.2%)</td>
<td>Graduate/profess (33.5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Employment status</strong></td>
<td>Full time (51.1%)</td>
<td>Full time (64.8%)</td>
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<td>Part time (17.6%)</td>
<td>Part time (13.7%)</td>
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<td>Unemployed looking (9.3%)</td>
<td>Unemployed looking (4.4%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unemployed choice (19.8%)</td>
<td>Unemployed choice (4.9%)</td>
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Longitudinal Data

**Time 2**

- $n = 152 (83.5\%)$ of the original adolescents and their families were followed 18 months later
  
  - Time 1: average 15 years old (12-17)
  - Time 2: average of 16.5 years old (13.5 – 18.5)
Assessment of acculturation

- Assessed multiple domains
  - Behaviors
  - Identity
  - Values

- Within each domain, assess adolescents’ orientation towards Canadian and Chinese cultures independently, consistent with the bi-dimensional model of acculturation (e.g., Costigan & Su, 2004; Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000).
Behavioral Domain

- Language use and preferences, media preferences, social contacts, holidays and traditions, medicine, food
- Adapted and expanded from ARSMA-R (Cuéllar et al., 1995)

**Canadian** behavioral involvement (15 items)
- “I enjoy speaking English”
- “My friends now are of White/Canadian origins.”

**Chinese** behavioral involvement (15 items)
- “I enjoy speaking Chinese”
- “My friends now are of Chinese origins.”
Identity Domain

- **Chinese Identity:** Phinney’s MEIM (ethnic identity) (Phinney, 1992)
- **Canadian Identity:** adapted MEIM

- Two domains
  - Affirmation/belonging
  - Identity achievement
Identity Affirmation/belonging

- Attitude towards ethnic/cultural group, affective component

- Chinese dimension
  - “I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background”
  - “I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group.”

- Canadian dimension
  - “I feel good about my Canadian cultural background”
  - “I have a lot of pride in Canadians”
Identity Achievement

- Process of actively exploring, learning and reflecting on the importance of one’s ethnic/cultural identity

- Chinese dimension
  - “I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me.”

- Canadian dimension
  - “I have a clear sense of my Canadian background and what it means for me”
Value Domain

- **Chinese Dimension**
  - Asian Values scale – 11 items assessing traditional values related to qualities such as interdependence, achievement, humility, etc. (Kim et al., 1999)

- “People should consider the needs of others before considering their own needs.”
- “People should be humble and modest.”
Value Domain

- **Canadian Dimension**
  - Beliefs about Families – 8 items assessing rights of boys and girls to make independent decisions (Rosenthal et al., 1996)

- “It is all right for **girls** over the age of 18 to decide when to marry and whom to marry.”

- “It is all right for **boys** to choose their own career.”
The Current Study

Using a multidimensional conceptualization of acculturation

1. Examine how acculturation changes over time
2. Evaluate evidence for a bi-dimensional model of acculturation
3. Assess how aspects of acculturation influence one another over time
Objective #1

Examine how acculturation changes over time within each domain
## Stability of acculturation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors</th>
<th>Time 1 – Time 2 Correlation Coefficient</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviors</td>
<td>.73***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identity Affirmation</td>
<td>.37***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identity Achievement</td>
<td>.45***</td>
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<td>Values</td>
<td>.58***</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*** $p < .001$
Change Analyses

- Repeated Measures ANOVAS
  - Time ($T_1, T_2$) and Culture (Chinese, Canadian) as within-subjects factors
  - Gender (male, female) and Generational Status (1st, 1.5/2nd) as between-subjects factors
  - Controlling for age
Behavioral Domain

Time 2 = Time 1
Canadian > Chinese
No interaction between Time and Culture
Females > Males
2nd generation = 1st generation
Behavioral Domain: Time X Culture X Gen Stat interaction

Chinese Behaviors

Canadian Behaviors

1st generation increasing, 2nd generation decreasing
Identity Affirmation/Belonging

Time 2 > Time 1
Chinese > Canadian
No interaction between Time and Culture
Females > Males
2\textsuperscript{nd} generation = 1\textsuperscript{st} generation
Affirmation/Belonging: Time X Culture X Gender interaction

No increase in Canadian affirmation
Identity Achievement

Time 2 = Time 1
Chinese = Canadian
No interaction between Time and Culture
**Females > Males**
2\(^{nd}\) generation = 1\(^{st}\) generation
Identity Achievement: Time X Culture X Gender interaction

Increasing Chinese identity achievement
Decreasing Canadian achievement
Value Domain

Chinese Values

- Time 1
- Time 2

Canadian Values

- Time 1
- Time 2

Time 2 = Time 1
Females = Males
2\textsuperscript{nd} generation = 1\textsuperscript{st} generation

Time 2 > Time 1
Females = Males
2\textsuperscript{nd} generation = 1\textsuperscript{st} generation
Summary of Change evidence

- Behavioral engagement stable
  - Except Chinese behavioral engagement increasing for 1st generation youth and decreasing for 1.5 and 2nd generation youth

- Feelings of identity affirmation/ belonging increase over time
  - Except males’ Canadian affirmation unchanged

- No overall changes in exploration and understanding of ethnic identity over time
  - Except males show increase in identity achievement with respect to Chinese culture and decrease with respect to Canadian culture

- Endorsement of Chinese values stable

- Endorsement of values related to adolescent independence increase
Objective #2

Evaluate evidence for a bi-dimensional model of acculturation
Uni- vs. Bi-dimensional model

- Is a strong Canadian orientation incompatible with a strong Chinese orientation?
- Across domains of behaviors, identity, values?

-1.00  0.00  +1.00

Inversely related  Unrelated  Positively related
Results support bi-dimensional

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Chinese-Canadian Correlations</th>
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<td>Time 1</td>
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<td>Behaviors</td>
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<td>Identity affirmation</td>
<td>.25**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identity achievement</td>
<td>.46***</td>
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<td>Values</td>
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</table>

- No evidence for bipolar model
- Independent processes: behavior and value domains
- Compatible processes in identity domain
- Largely similar results for males vs. female and 1st vs. 2nd generation
Objective #3

- Assess how aspects of acculturation influence one another over time
Predicting Chinese identity & values

- Does behavioral involvement in Chinese culture support the growth of Chinese identity and values?

- Does behavioral involvement in Canadian culture interfere with the growth of Chinese identity and values?

- Primary concern of parents

- Requires longitudinal data
Predicting **Chinese identity & values**

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Predicting **Canadian** identity & values

- Does behavioral involvement in Canadian culture support the growth of Canadian identity and values?

- Does behavioral involvement in Chinese culture interfere with the growth of Canadian identity and values?

- Primary concern of receiving culture
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<td>Generational Status</td>
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Conclusions

- More evidence for stability than change in acculturation over 18 months
  - Generational status played only a minor role
  - Need to look closely at males’ identity development during adolescence – greater divergence of Chinese and Canadian dimensions?
Conclusions

- Acculturation should be conceptualized & assessed as bi-dimensional
  - Maintenance of heritage culture is independent of adoption of dominant culture in new country
  - Retention of ethnic cultural behaviors (language, media, social ties, etc.) does not hinder adoption of Canadian identity or values
  - Adopting Canadian culture does not necessarily mean loss of heritage Chinese culture (e.g., does not detract from retention of ethnic identity and values)
Implications

- Need more complex conceptualization and assessment of acculturation in future research to move the literature forward

- Policies and programs that promote heritage culture retention

- Families – understand independence of heritage and new culture orientations, don’t fear children’s Canadian involvement
Future directions

- Longer time frames over different developmental periods for studying change
- Place individual trajectories within a family context
- Untangling developmental processes from acculturation changes
- Socio-economic status indicators – how best to assess in an immigrant sample?
Acknowledgements

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