

Analysis of Acculturative Strategies' Effects on Asian Adolescents' Psychosocial Well-Being and Ethnic Identity Development

Presenter: Lang Duong | Advisor: Dr. Beth Kurtz-Costes

Department of Psychology and Neuroscience at the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill



Introduction

- **Ethnic Identity Development:** The formation of ethnic identity is an indispensable component to identity exploration, especially for adolescents of color.¹
- **Ethnic Identity and Psychosocial Well-being:** In addition to providing social benefits and group membership, an established ethnic identity predicts better psychological adjustment outcomes and higher levels of psychosocial well-being.²
- **Collectivistic Vs. Individualistic Cultures:** The highlighted difference between the two extremes is how active agents within that culture view the self with regards to their community.³
- **Berry's Acculturative Strategies:** Berry approached cultural research with a bidimensional perspective by incorporating individuals' enculturation (interactions with the heritage culture) and acculturation (integration into other cultures).⁴
 - **Separated:** high enculturation and low acculturation
 - **Marginalized:** low enculturation and low acculturation
 - **Assimilated:** low enculturation and high acculturation
 - **Integrated:** high enculturation and high acculturation
- **Asian Adolescents:**
 1. Immigration rates are increasing for Asian populations.⁵
 2. The role of the "model minority" myth in ethnic identity development.⁶

Objective

In this report, I sought to understand how Asian adolescents' acculturative strategies can influence their psychosocial and identity development.

Methods

- Integrated findings from 6 different studies
- **Ages:** 12-55 (most were in high school or college)
- **Sample Sizes:** 83-417 per study (five out of six studies had over 200 participants)
- **Measures:**
 - Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale
 - Rosenberg's 10-item Self-Esteem Scale
- Two studies conducted qualitative interviews

Summary and Analysis of Findings

Assimilated

- Characterized as "whitewashed"⁸
 - Refuse to speak their heritage language
 - Have many non-Asian friends and /or date non-Asians
 - Behave and dress according to White culture
 - Unfamiliar with ethnic customs
- Viewed learning new cultural practices as expected and manageable with no accompanying negative emotion with the expectation of a successful integration into mainstream culture⁸
- Negative relationship between integration and self-esteem¹⁰

These users' absence of a strong sense of belonging to their heritage culture puts them at a higher risk of depending their self-worth on the dominant culture.

Marginalized

- Majority of this group consisted of foreign-born participants
- All participants resided in the US for an average of 16 years
- Lower acculturative stress than separated users and higher acculturative stress than integrated users⁷
- Felt a sense of inability or reluctance to overcome cultural difference and perceived them as unresolvable
- Worst overall quality of life
- Feelings of anger, disgust, and alienation⁹

These findings are consistent with previous research concluding that bicultural individuals who interpreted their two cultures as different are more likely to have lowered levels of identification. These users may see themselves as the "marginal man" and possess American and Asian cultural inauthenticity.

Integrated

- Bicultural competence
- Viewed cultural disparities as an opportunity to promote positive personal growth⁹
- Derived direct psychological benefits from holding positive perceptions about their ethnic group
- Positive regard towards ethnic culture served as a buffer against stressors¹¹
- Exhibited a positive relationship between self-esteem and integration¹⁰

Bicultural individuals who achieve full integration reap the most psychological benefits (e.g., resilience, social connectedness, happiness). Unlike assimilated users, integrated users possess a well-developed tie to their heritage culture that protects them from the negative effects of discrimination.

Separated

- Foreign-born participants more likely to utilize this strategy⁷
- "FOB" or "fresh off the boat" used as a racial slur against Asian immigrants⁸
 - Speaking with a thick accent
 - Using foreign language in public
- Poorer mental health, more acculturative stress, and less positive attitudes towards seeking psychological help⁷
- Saw cultural differences as expected and manageable, but reported confusion or difficulty in understanding Western culture
- Used compartmentalization as solution to adversity⁹

The joint effect of lowered confidence in integration and the presence of discriminated characteristics may lead to further ostracization. Participants may use this strategy as a protective means against rejection.

Conclusion

While this report served as a condensed analysis of a few studies, much more research needs to be done on ethnic identity exploration and development in underserved populations, such as Asian American immigrants. It is imperative cultural researchers and policymakers continue to take strides in identifying immigrants' barriers to attaining bicultural competence, as well as creating the necessary interventions to allow successful integration of immigrants into the dominant culture.

Resources

1. French, S. E., Seidman, E., Allen, L., & Aber, J. L. (2006). The development of ethnic identity during adolescence. *Developmental Psychology*, 42(1), 1-10.
2. Roberts, R. E., Phinney, J. S., Masse, L. C., Chen, Y. R., Roberts, C. R., & Romero, A. (1999). The Structure of Ethnic Identity of Young Adolescents from Diverse Ethnocultural Groups. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 19(3), 301-322.
3. Triandis, H. C. (1993). Collectivism and Individualism as Cultural Syndromes. *Cross-Cultural Research*, 27(3-4), 155-180.
4. Berry, J. W. (2007). *Acculturation strategies and adaptation*. In J. E. Lansford, K. Deater-Deckard, & M. H. Bornstein (Eds.), *Duke series in child development and public policy. Immigrant families in contemporary society* (p. 69-82). Guilford Press.
5. Lopez, G., Ruiz, N. G., & Patten, E. (2017). Key facts about Asian Americans, a diverse and growing population. Pew Research Center; Pew Research Center.
6. Gupta, A., Szymanski, D. M., & Leong, F. T. L. (2011). The "model minority myth": Internalized racism of positive stereotypes as correlates of psychological distress, and attitudes toward help-seeking. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 2(2), 101-114.
7. Miller, M. J., Yang, M., Lim, R. H., Hui, K., Choi, N.-Y., Fan, X., ... Blackmon, S. (2013). A test of the domain-specific acculturation strategy hypothesis. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 19(1), 1-12.
8. Pyke, K., Dang, T. "FOB" and "Whitewashed": Identity and Internalized Racism Among Second Generation Asian Americans. *Qualitative Sociology* 26, 147-172 (2003).
9. Lieber, E., Chin, D., Nihira, K., & Mink, I. T. (2001). Holding on and letting go: Identity and acculturation among Chinese immigrants. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 7(3), 247-261.
10. Chae, M. H., & Foley, P. F. (2010). Relationship of Ethnic Identity, Acculturation, and Psychological Well-Being Among Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Americans. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 88(4), 466-476. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6678.2010.tb00047.x>
11. Kiang, L., Yip, T., Gonzales-Backen, M., Witkow, M., & Fuligni, A. J. (2006). Ethnic Identity and the Daily Psychological Well-Being of Adolescents From Mexican and Chinese Backgrounds. *Child Development*, 77(5), 1338-1350.