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PREVIEW

**CORRELATES OF COPING OF THREE CHINESE ADOLESCENT COHORTS
IN TORONTO, CANADA: ACCULTURATION AND ACCULTURATIVE STRESS**

by

Benjamin Chung-Hsing Kuo

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**Interdepartmental Area of
Major: Psychological and Cultural Studies
(Counseling Psychology)**

Under the Supervision of Professor Gargi Roysircar-Sodowsky

Lincoln, Nebraska

July, 2001

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**CORRELATES OF COPING OF THREE CHINESE ADOLESCENT COHORTS IN
TORONTO, CANADA: ACCULTURATION AND ACCULTURATIVE STRESS**

Benjamin Chung-Hsing Kuo, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2001

Advisor: Dr. Gargi Roysircar-Sodowsky

The study examined acculturation, acculturative stress, and coping behaviors of 506 Chinese immigrant adolescents from three cohorts [284 Early-Entry Chinese Immigrants (ECI), 106 Late-Entry Chinese Immigrants (LCI), and 108 Chinese Sojourners (CS)] in Toronto, Canada. The participants completed a questionnaire that included: 1) the Social Customs and Language subscales of the Minority-Majority Relations Scale (MMRS: Sodowsky, Lai, & Plake, 1991); 2) Cultural Stress Items of the Cultural Adjustment Difficulties Checklist (CADC: Sodowsky & Lai, 1997); and 3) the Cross-Cultural Coping Scale (CCCS) developed for the study.

Exploratory factor analysis of the CCCS yielded a four-factor solution and accounted for 33.4% of the total variance in coping scores. This structure supported conceptual dimensions of: 1) Collectivistically-Oriented Coping ($\alpha=.87$) with group-referenced and values-based Factors (2 factors); and 2) Individualistically-Oriented Coping ($\alpha=.73$) with problem-focused and avoidance Factors (2 factors). The final version of the CCCS consisted of 44 items ($\alpha=.86$: 22 identical coping items for two scenarios).

As hypothesized, a significant MANOVA was found indicating overall cohort

group differences in Acculturation, Acculturative Stress, and Coping. ANOVAs and Tukey tests further revealed that the ECI group significantly differed from LCI and CS groups in these variables. ECI had higher acculturation, lower acculturative stress, and lower use of coping attempts than both LCI and CS. However, no significant difference was found between LCI and CS. Multiple regressions showed that: 1) Individualistically-Oriented Coping was predicted by Acculturative Stress; 2) Collectivistically-Oriented Coping was predicted by Acculturation; and 3) Acculturation was significantly predicted by Age, Years of Residence in Canada, and SES Index.

The study demonstrated cohort differences among Chinese adolescents in Toronto with regard to acculturation issues and coping. The CCCS appears to be a promising multicultural instrument for cross-cultural research or clinical assessment of coping. These results are discussed and suggestions are provided for future research.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

From an adolescent sojourner to a researcher of sojourners is a fitting description of my personal transformation and represents the backdrop of this dissertation. This doctoral dissertation culminates a realization of a long-standing personal dream which began 20 years ago when I went to Canada as a 15 year-old unaccompanied sojourner. Reflecting upon this journey, I come away with a strong sense of gratification, gratitude, and humility. My years of sojourner experiences, both in Canada and in the U.S., have produced in me tremendous growth and enrichment personally, academically, and professionally. My capacity to contribute to the understanding of newcomers and immigrants through research is perhaps an appropriate tribute to my own invaluable cross-cultural experience.

This dissertation incorporated the collective efforts of many individuals. To my community contacts, those who helped me tirelessly to distribute and collect the questionnaires, I give my heart-felt gratitude and regards; without these individuals I would not have been able to reach out to as many Chinese adolescents as I did my sampling. I thank all of my adolescent participants for their willingness to take part in my study. I want to express my appreciation to the Human Rights and Human Diversity Interdepartmental Program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This program helped to fund this dissertation research through the Graduate Student Research Fellowship for the summer, 2000.

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mine can serve as a testimony of His abundance and faithfulness for those who love and trust Him.

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Chapter One:

Introduction

Since the 1960's North America has experienced a new influx of immigrants from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean (Rumbaut, 1997; Statistics Canada, 1996). The children of foreign-born, first-generation immigrants have begun to change North American society with their numbers and visibility. Zhou (1997) noted that immigrant children have become the fastest-growing and the most ethnically diverse segment of America's child population since the 1980s. The rapid growth of immigrant children and adolescent populations are also being felt in school systems across North America, especially in the major urban areas (Esquivel & Keitel, 1990; Kopala, Esquivel, Baptiste, 1994). However, researchers have pointed out a critical gap between the emergence of immigrant children and adolescents and the lack of knowledge about their conditions (Aronowitz, 1984, 1992; Rumbaut, 1994; Zhou, 1997). In fact, limited information is currently known about either first-generation immigrant children or U.S.-born second-generation children of immigrants in North America (Portes, 1997a). Currently, research on the new wave of immigrants and refugees in the U.S. since the 1960's has largely been dominated by studies of foreign-born, first-generation adults (Aronowitz, 1984; Kuo & Roysircar-Sodowsky, 1999; Roysircar-Sodowsky & Maestas, 2000; Rumbaut, 1994; Sodowsky & Lai, 1997; Sodowsky, Lai, & Plake, 1991). Rumbaut (1994) noted:

Even less is known about the subjective aspects of the children's experience, as processed within their phenomenal field-what we refer to here as the 'crucible

within”—including their modes of ethnic or national self-identification, perceptions of discrimination, aspirations for their adult futures, cultural preferences, forms of intergenerational cohesion or conflict within their families, self-esteem and psychological well-being, and how these may be related to more objective indices of their experience, such as their school and work performance and language shifts from the mother tongue to English, in given social contexts. (p.752)

On the other hand, a similar concern has also been raised about the increasing presence of international adolescent students in Canadian and U.S. high schools and middle schools (Berry, 1985; Pedersen, 1991; Wilson, 1983). Literature on international students has so far been dominated by research on college and graduate student populations (Berry, 1985; Ihle, Sodowsky, & Kwan, 1996; Pedersen, 1991; Sodowsky, 1991; Sodowsky, Maguire, Johnson, Ngumba, & Kohl, 1994; Sodowsky & Plake, 1992; Suthakaran & Roysircar-Sodowsky, in press). Pedersen (1991) observed:

The emphasis has been entirely on counseling international students in U.S. colleges and universities. There was [has been] very little reference to counseling international high school or elementary school students. This very limited but growing literature is an area demanding much new research. (p.51)

Purpose of the Study

In view of the ever-increasing presence of ethnic minority children and adolescents in North America and inadequate empirical data on this population, the current study intends to address two major issues. First, the study hopes to contribute to

much-needed empirical data on Asian immigrant adolescents in North America. The study examined Chinese Canadian adolescents from three cohort groups in Toronto, Canada: *Early-Entry Chinese Immigrant adolescents*, *Late-Entry Chinese Immigrant adolescents*, and *Chinese Sojourner adolescents* (international participants). The experiences of Chinese adolescents in Canada were operationalized on the basis of theory on acculturation and acculturative stress (Berry, 1997; Roysircar-Sodowsky & Maestas, 2000), and on the theory of coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Schwarzer & Schwarzer, 1996). Second, the study tested a cross-cultural coping instrument that was developed for the current study. This multicultural instrument of coping purports to measure coping mechanisms used by Chinese immigrant and sojourner adolescents in managing acculturative stress.

Adolescent Immigrants

The phenomenon of ‘new immigrants’ or post-World War II immigrants and their children in North America is gradually being felt in both Canada and the U.S. However, previous scholarly attention has largely neglected these “new” immigrants. Porters (1997b) pointed to a number of reasons for such neglect: 1) the relative youth of this group owing to their post-1965 immigration to the U.S.; 2) the obscurity of census and official data concerning them; and 3) the relative invisibility of immigrants of color until recently when there has been a dramatic increase in birth rates in immigrant groups.

These significant points concerning immigrants in the U.S. and Canada are noteworthy for these facts. First, the population surge of Asian immigrants through

immigration is evident in both countries. In the U.S., the post-World War II period has attracted substantial waves of immigration from Asia and Latin America. These immigrants constitute the majority of immigrants to this country since 1970 (Rumbaut, 1997). Asians and Pacific Islanders comprised 3.8 % (10.2 million) of the total U.S. population in 1998, which was a 35% population increase since July of 1990 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998).

In Canada in 1996, the Asian presence was even stronger than that in the U.S. Slightly over 7 % (2.07 million) of the total Canadian population was represented by Asians (e.g., Chinese, South Asian, Filipino, Southeast Asian, Japanese, and Korean) (Statistics Canada, 1996). Much of this growth in the Asian Canadian population is attributed to a recent flux of immigration from Asian countries. The Statistics Canada (1996) indicated that Asian-born immigrants accounted for more than half (57%) of the recent immigrants in Canada between 1991-1996. This figure was up from previous census data on Asian immigrants, for example 3% before 1961; 12% in the 1960s; and 33% in the 1970s. Hong Kong, the People's Republic of China, India, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka led the list for recent immigrants.

Second, Asian immigrants in the U.S. and Canada are characterized by their relative youth. Oropesa and Landale's (1997) analyses of the 1990 U.S. Census indicated that 90% of Asian American children and 60% of the Latino children belonged to the first or second generation, as compared to 6% of non-Latino African American children and 5% of non-Latino European American children. The recency of Asian Americans in

the U.S. is evident in the high proportions of first- and second-generation children among Asian populations. For example, based on one estimation in 1997, Oropesa and Landale observed that 47% of the Japanese American child population, 91% of the Chinese American child population, 99% of the Vietnamese and the Asian Indian child population belonged to the first- and second-generations. A further breakdown of Chinese American population shows that in 1990, 30% of Chinese American children were first generation, 61% were second generation, and 9% were third generation.

In 1996, a third (33%) of Canada's visible minority population was represented by children and adolescents under the age of 24, with the proportion being higher (36%) for Chinese Canadians (Statistics Canada, 1996). Among those who identified themselves as South Asian, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Southeast Asian, and Filipino, 22% were reported to be between the ages of 0-14, and another 16% to be between the ages of 15-24. Furthermore, the configuration of the foreign-born vs. native-born visible minorities in Canada closely reflects the historical immigration patterns of the country. For instance, in 1996, 65% of the Japanese were reported to being born in Canada, while that was true only for 29% of South Asians (Statistics Canada, 1996).

Third, despite the notable growth of immigrant children and adolescents, researchers have pointed to the relatively limited research on their social and emotional development (Aronowitz, 1984, 1992; Rumbaut, 1994; Zhou, 1997; Sung, 1985). Aronowitz (1984) observed the lack of conceptual efforts in examining and understanding the effects of migration on children. Rumbaut (1994) made a similar

conclusion a decade later. He asserted that despite their increasing visibility, very limited studies have been devoted to examine “the adaptation process of immigrant children and of their prospects for the future.”

Unaccompanied Adolescent Sojourners

There is another even more neglected subgroup of Asian adolescents: the unaccompanied adolescent sojourners. Young unaccompanied sojourners from Asian countries (e.g., China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Korea) live and study in the United States and Canada without the company of their parents (Hong, 1998; Kim, 1998; Lin, 1998). In 1990, an estimated 30,000 to 40,000 Taiwanese unaccompanied minors between ages 8 to 18 were reported to be living in the U.S. (Forden, 1990; Hwang & Watanabe, 1990; Kuo, 1991). In 1993, there were approximately 10,000 of these adolescents in South California alone (Lin, 1998). In Canada, there were 11,619 foreign students from Asian countries between 1995-1996, studying in Canadian elementary and secondary schools (Bureau Canadian de l'éducation internationale, 1997). Most of these students would be unaccompanied adolescents who were in Canada without their parents. In 1996-1997, there were 5,956 foreign students whose countries of origins were Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China, and these students were studying at the Canadian elementary and secondary levels (Bureau Canadian de l'éducation internationale, 1997).

However, information on unaccompanied adolescents from East Asia has been obscured by insufficient official records (Lin, 1998; Kim, 1998), paucity of research (Chow, 1990; Hwang & Watanabe, 1990; Kuo, 1991; Lin, 1992, 1998), and negative

portrayal by the mass media (Kim, 1998). The limited research that there is on Chinese unaccompanied sojourners points to their acculturation-related difficulties, such as cultural adjustment difficulties (Hwang & Watanabe, 1990; Kuo, 1991; Lin, 1992), education-related concerns (Chow, 1990; Lee, 1994), and psychological and emotional problems (Cheng, 1994; Chung, 1994; Lin, 1992). Therefore, more research on young international students in North America's high schools and middle schools (Berry, 1985; Pedersen, 1991; Wilson, 1983) and specifically on unaccompanied adolescent sojourners (Sieu, 1998) is needed.

Development of a Culturally-Based Coping Measure

There is limited cross-cultural research on coping among ethnic minority individuals (Colomba, Santiago, & Rossello, 1999; Copeland & Hess, 1995; Dyal & Dyal, 1981; Rosella, 1994). The existing research reviewed for this study suggest a relationship between cultural factors and coping behaviors. Cultural and ethnic differences in coping are mediated by cultural norms and values (Diaz-Guerrero, 1973; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Olah, 1995), acculturation-related sociocultural variables (e.g., generation status) (Berry & Kim, 1988; Cervantes & Castro, 1985; Schmitz, 1992), support and resources related to an ethnic community and family (Colomba et al., 1999; Dressler & Bernal, 1982; Laosa, 1990; Seiffge-Krenke, 1995; Sadowsky & Lai, 1997), and the sociopolitical experiences of racial minorities (e.g., racial discrimination) (Phinney & Chavira, 1995; Smith, 1985). In sum, these factors have been found to

influence individuals' perceptions of stressors and their cognitive appraisals of coping effectiveness and appropriateness (e.g., Olah, 1995).

One methodological weaknesses of the existing research on ethnic minorities' coping is the failure to employ culturally valid instruments in the study of ethnic minority stress and coping. The use of Western coping instruments appears to be the norm in this body of research (see Colomba et al., 1999; Mena, Padilla, & Maldonado, 1987; Zhang & Berry, 1991 for example). As a result, culturally-unique aspects of coping behaviors might have been overlooked. It is not clear the ways in which social and cultural characteristics (e.g., collective resources such as social support, family, community, and cultural values) of ethnic groups contribute to their coping behaviors.

One possible solution to this measurement shortcoming is to develop and apply a culturally-based measure. In multicultural and cross-cultural research, the use of ethnic group-specific instruments has been gaining increased importance (Dana, 2000; Samuda, Feuerstein, Kaufmar, Lewis, Sternberg, & Associates, 1998; Sadowsky & Impara, 1996). The study proposes a coping measure which takes into consideration the complex internal and external variables of Asian adolescents. With regard to internal variables, Cervantes and Castro (1985) noted the importance of considering the impact of ethnic minority individuals' attitudes and values on appraisal of stressors, subsequent coping responses, and resulting mental health outcomes. Language, level of acculturation, personality traits, identification with traditional versus non-traditional values, socioeconomic status, intelligence, and emotional states are considered to be mediators

of stress (Cervantes & Castro, 1985; Roysircar-Sodowsky & Maestas, 2000). Externally, social resources available to immigrants are found to be crucial in mediating stress and coping (Dresseler & Bernal, 1982; Dyal & Dyal, 1981). Cervantes and Castro contended that the role of extended family-kinships, religious/spiritual affiliations, supportive versus non-supportive work relationships, and the nature of available social service and/or health service agencies were critical external mediators of stress and coping.

Therefore, with respect to the instrument development and psychometric testing components, two objectives were put forth. First, the culturally-based coping instrument developed for the study examines the different ways in which Asian adolescents adapt to acculturative stress. Currently, there is no known measure that assesses coping in direct relation to acculturation and acculturative stresses. Previous investigations concerning coping and acculturative stress have typically relied upon correlational methods to examine the relationship, for instance, the correlation between a general coping measure and an acculturation measure (see Mena et al., 1987; Zhang & Berry, 1991).

In the current study, the coping measure assesses coping in relation to Chinese immigrant and sojourner adolescents' experiences of acculturative stresses. The instrument consists of two acculturation-specific scenarios that serve to solicit coping responses to these situations. Hence, the participants' coping behaviors were measured in a situational specific way. However, the analyses of the inter-variable correlations among acculturation, acculturative stress, and coping, were multivariate and multidimensional in nature.

For the objective, the coping instrument identified culturally unique aspects of adaptation and coping behaviors of Chinese adolescents. The proposed instrument incorporated broadly Asian attitudes, values, and social resources in its conceptualization of coping.

Definition of Variables

Acculturation

The concept of acculturation was originally theorized as a collective- or group-level construct that resulted from the contacts of two culturally distinct groups (Berry, 1980; Graves, 1967). Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) cited a definition of acculturation as furnished by the Social Science Research Council:

Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups (p.149).

Thus, at the group level, acculturation refers to a process whereby the minority group determines the extent to which it will maintain its own cultural identity and characteristic versus make contact with and participate in the dominant group (Berry et al., 1989). However, individual members of a given acculturating group have been found to experience acculturation differently from their group (Berry, 1997). “Psychological acculturation” is an expansion of the original acculturation concept as applied to describe experiences at the individual level (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987; Graves, 1967).