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Facilitating adaptation and intercultural contact: The role of integration and multicultural ideology in dominant and non-dominant groups



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ABSTRACT

Research on acculturation has documented that adaptation to a receiving society is affected by both the immigrants' acculturation strategies and the dominant group's expectations about how immigrants should acculturate. However, the acculturation expectations have received relatively less attention from researchers, and support for multiculturalism has rarely been examined from the perspective of immigrants. The present study used the framework of the Mutual Intercultural Relations in Plural Societies (MIRIPS) project to investigate the acculturation experiences and intercultural relations in Hong Kong by incorporating mutual views of both the dominant and non-dominant groups. It also tested the mediating role of the dominant group's tolerance towards different cultural groups and the non-dominant group's perceived discrimination. Two community samples were recruited, including Hong Kong residents ($N = 181$) and immigrants from Mainland China ($N = 182$). Among Mainland immigrants, the integration strategy predicted both psychological adaptation and sociocultural adaptation. Multicultural ideology predicted psychological adaptation and played a significant role in intercultural contact with Hong Kong people through the mediation of lower perceived discrimination. Among Hong Kong residents, the integration expectation predicted psychological adaptation. Multicultural ideology indirectly affected intercultural contact with Mainland immigrants through the mediation of greater tolerance. These results suggest that the integration strategy and expectation are more important to intrapersonal functioning, whereas multicultural ideology may be more crucial in facilitating social interactions between members of the society of settlement and immigrants in culturally plural milieus. Future research should test the proposed models of dominant and non-dominant groups in other cultures.

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1. Introduction

Most contemporary societies are culturally diverse due to globalisation and world-wide immigration. Inevitably, all ethnocultural groups living in the plural milieu are affected by contact with people from other cultural groups. How to facilitate adaptation and intercultural relations has long been of interest in social, intercultural and cross-cultural psychology. This interest has stimulated both theoretical and empirical work investigating the process of acculturation. While some previous research on acculturation examined the views of the larger society in interaction with the non-dominant groups (beginning with Berry, 1974, 1980; Berry, Kalin, & Taylor, 1977), most research has tended to focus mainly on non-dominant groups. In contrast, most research on intercultural relations has examined the views of the dominant groups (Berry, 2001), including their attitudes towards immigrants and members of ethnocultural groups. The main objective of the present study is to examine the interplay of these two domains in order to predict acculturation outcomes and intercultural relations from a more comprehensive perspective.

2. Predictors of acculturation and intercultural relations

2.1. Acculturation strategies/expectations

Acculturation was initially conceptualised as a unidimensional process in which the heritage culture and the culture of the receiving society were two opposite ends of a single continuum (e.g., Gordon, 1964). Subsequently, researchers conceptualised acculturation as a bidimensional process in which retention of heritage culture/ethnically non-dominant identification and acquisition of receiving culture/dominant group identification are not placed at either extreme of one bipolar dimension, but are considered as independent dimensions (e.g., Berry, 1974; Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000). Berry (1980) proposed that there are two fundamental, orthogonal dimensions of acculturation—*cultural maintenance* (the wish to preserve cultural identity and characteristics of one's cultural heritage), and *contact and participation in the life of the larger society* (the wish to interact with members of other groups). Intersecting these two dimensions produces four distinct ways of acculturating: integration (participating in both cultures), assimilation (participating in the receiving society but not the heritage culture), separation (maintaining the heritage but not participating in the receiving society), and marginalisation (lack of interest or participation in either culture).

These ways carry different terminologies, depending on which cultural group, the dominant or non-dominant, is considered (Berry, 1997). When the four ways of acculturating pertain to non-dominant ethnocultural groups that are in contact with a dominant group, these have become known as *acculturation strategies* (Berry, 2001). Since acculturation is a process involving two groups in contact, there are thus influences on *both* groups. When the dominant group's views about how a non-dominant group *should* acculturate, the four ways have been named as *acculturation expectations* (Berry, 2001), and parallel the acculturation strategies among non-dominant peoples.

Despite this mutual acculturation relationship, members of the non-dominant group are usually affected to a greater extent than members of the receiving culture (Berry, 2001). As a result, most studies on acculturation have tended to focus on non-dominant groups with less attention to the impact on the dominant population (Pionkowski, Rohmann, & Florack, 2002). Since these studies mostly have predicted the non-dominant group members' adaptation outcomes or intergroup relations (Brown & Zagefka, 2011), how acculturation expectations affect the psychological adaptation of members of the receiving society has been under-investigated in acculturation research.

2.2. Multiculturalism

The world has become increasingly multicultural. As a result of migration and globalisation, the populations of many societies (such as Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Singapore, Sweden, and the Netherlands), have become ethnically and culturally diverse. In such a multicultural milieu, the well-being and intercultural relations of inhabitants (both dominant and non-dominant), may be influenced by their views towards cultural pluralism in their society. These views may vary in the extent to which they support a multicultural ideology and engage in intercultural relations. These variations may well affect their psychological and behavioural responses.

Multiculturalism refers to both the demographic presence of cultural diversity in a society, and to general attitudes concerning the acceptance of this culturally diverse nature of the society. In this research, we focus on the latter. This attitude includes mutual respect for cultural differences and active support for equal chances among dominant and non-dominant groups (e.g., Berry & Kalin, 1995; Van de Vijver, Breugelmans, & Schalk-Soekar, 2008). While research on multiculturalism has mainly focused on members of dominant groups, much has also been carried out with members of ethnocultural groups (Berry, 2006; Berry et al., 1977). There has been increasing research attention paid to how intercultural relations affect the adaptation outcomes and intergroup contact of immigrants and ethnic groups (e.g., Yagmur & Van de Vijver, 2012). Such research is especially scarce in Asian countries (Leong & Berry, 2009); hence, there is a need to fill this knowledge gap. Empirical studies in many societies reveal that the levels of support for multiculturalism among dominant group members vary from one country to another. Berry and Kalin (1995) reported that dominant group members in Canada favoured multiculturalism, while Ho (1990) found only moderate support for multiculturalism in Australia. Interestingly,

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