

Comparison of Cultural Adaptation, Cultural Maintenance between Han Chinese and Ethnic Minority College Students in Northwestern China's Minority Areas

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Abstract: This study compares how cultural adaptation, cultural maintenance, and multiculturalism relate to the ethnic identity of Han Chinese and Chinese ethnic minorities in Northwestern China. To obtain the data, 147 college students were selected at random from five universities in Northwestern China's minority areas, and they completed a survey. Analysis of the results yields the following conclusions: for the ethnic minority Chinese population, 1) no correlation exists between the Chinese ethnic minorities' cultural maintenance and their adaptation to Han culture, 2) the ethnic identification of the Chinese ethnic minorities is positively correlated with their cultural maintenance, and 3) the multiculturalism of Chinese ethnic minorities is positively correlated with their cultural adaptation to Han culture; for the Han Chinese population, 1) the ethnic identification of Han Chinese college students is positively correlated with their attitude toward Chinese ethnic minorities' adaptation to the dominant Han culture, and 2) the Han Chinese's ethnic identity is not correlated with their attitude toward the cultural maintenance of minority Chinese college students.

1. Introduction

A prominent feature of the era of globalization is diversity, which affects many aspects of society, especially ethnic identity and national identity. Most societies are rapidly becoming multicultural, and numerous countries worldwide are not nation-states but multiethnic societies. Therefore, individuals of different ethnic identities think about multiculturalism differently. Similarly, individuals of the ethnic majority have different thoughts on how Chinese ethnic minorities sustain their culture and adapt to the mainstream culture in multiethnic countries. Ethnic identity, cultural maintenance, and cultural adaptation in multiethnic countries are inextricably linked to national unity and social stability; thus, they are important issues. Most early research includes theoretical studies^[1], and the results show that the majority groups emphasize the necessity or desirability of the identity of Chinese ethnic minorities to the dominant culture and the desirability of cultural maintenance. The study is organized as follows: a theoretical review and our survey method are described, followed by the results and analysis; finally, the conclusions and discussion are provided.

2. Key Terminology

The key terms in this study are cultural adaptation, cultural maintenance, ethnic identification, and multiculturalism (as the intervening variable). Their definitions and an explanation of the theoretical relationships between the constructs are provided in this section.

2.1 Cultural Maintenance and Cultural Adaptation

The two-dimensional model has been used in several studies^{[2][3]}. One investigation of ethnic

minorities in the Netherlands revealed that the second stage and the integration stage appear most frequently (for a review, see^[4]). The present study, based on the two-dimensional model, examines the extent to which ethnic minority and Han Chinese college students each emphasize the importance of cultural maintenance and cultural adaptation by Chinese ethnic minorities. Furthermore, the study analyzes the relationships between each group's identity and their respective views on maintaining and adapting cultures.

2.2 Ethnic Identification

Ethnic identification, as distinct from one's race, is a part of one's self-concept derived from one's knowledge of a social group^[5]. Any individual in a multiethnic society may have a strong sense of identity with one's ethnic minority and may also try to adapt to the dominant culture for an effective life. This study examines whether the ethnic identity of Han college students is positively correlated with the attitude of ethnic minorities to adapt to Han culture and negatively correlated with the attitude of maintaining ethnic minority culture.

2.3 Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is a social intellectual movement that promotes the value of diversity as a core principle and insists that all cultural groups be treated with respect and equality. Researchers have investigated how multiculturalism and assimilation ideologies affect minority and majority groups. In the present study, we examine the role of the ethnic minority Chinese multiculturalism endorsement as the adjusting variable in the cultural maintenance by Chinese ethnic minorities and cultural adaptation to Han Chinese culture.

3. Hypotheses

To answer the research questions listed in the previous section, the following hypotheses are proposed:

(1) Chinese ethnic minorities place greater emphasis on cultural maintenance and pay less attention to cultural adaptation to the Han majority culture, whereas Han Chinese place less emphasis on the cultural maintenance of Chinese ethnic minorities and greater importance on the cultural adaptation of Chinese ethnic minorities to Han culture.

(2) For Chinese ethnic minorities, respective cultural maintenance and adaptation to Han culture are independent, whereas for Han Chinese, these factors are negatively correlated.

(3) For Chinese ethnic minorities, ethnic identification is positively related to emphasis on cultural maintenance, and multiculturalism endorsement is positively related to views on cultural adaptation to Han culture.

(4) For the Han Chinese, the ethnic identity is positively correlated with the ethnic minorities' adaptation to the Han culture, and negatively correlated with the ethnic minorities' maintenance of Chinese culture. However, for the Han Chinese with a high degree of multicultural identity, the relationship between their attitude towards the adaptation of Chinese minorities to Han culture and the maintenance of Chinese minority culture is weak.

4. Methods

4.1 Participants

In total, 147 (70 Han Chinese and 77 ethnic minority Chinese) college students participated in the study. Among them, 60.5% were female, and 39.5% were male. This gender distribution was the same between minority Chinese and Han Chinese students (chi-square = 2.12, $p > 0.01$). The average age of the participants was 22.50 years (SD = 2.39), and 79.9% were enrolled in ethnic universities in which

most of the students are Chinese ethnic minorities, whereas 20.1% were enrolled in comprehensive universities.

This study was completed in five universities in Northwest Chinese minority areas. The participants completed the questionnaires anonymously. In these ethnic universities, a high percentage of students belong to various Chinese ethnic minorities (approximately 65%).

4.2 Questionnaire Design

Questionnaire on cultural maintenance and cultural adaptation. The answers were scored on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represented strongly disagree and 5 represented strongly agree. One item each was related to cultural adaptation and cultural maintenance. These items were “Every minority Chinese should adapt to Han culture,” and “Every minority Chinese should maintain their own culture as much as possible.”

Questionnaire on ethnic identification. Three items were used to evaluate ethnic identification. These items were taken from prior studies (Guan et al., 2011). The three items were “I consider myself a typical minority /Han Chinese,” “I am glad to be a minority /Han Chinese,” and “I don’t being a minority/Han Chinese” (reverse coded). The responses were scaled ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The item scale exhibited internal compliance with Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.76$ for the Han Chinese participants and $\alpha = 0.78$ for the ethnic minority group participants, with a higher score indicating stronger ethnic identification.

Questionnaire on multiculturalism endorsement. Multiculturalism endorsement was measured using seven items, which were mainly derived from previous studies [18]. The items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The seven-item questionnaire was internally consistent for both the Han Chinese and the Chinese ethnic minorities ($\alpha = 0.75$ and 0.81 , respectively).

5. Results

Factorial analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted with four factors: ethnicity (Han Chinese/ethnic minority Chinese), cultural adaptation, cultural maintenance, and multicultural identity, which are used to assess the means and standard deviations of the Han Chinese and ethnic minority Chinese populations’ attitudes toward culture maintenance by Chinese ethnic minorities, cultural adaptation to Han culture, ethnic identity, and multicultural identity by two groups of college students. As shown in Table 1, clear, significant, and relatively strong (eta-value) differences between Han and ethnic minority Chinese were identified for all measures.

Table 1. Total Means and Standard Deviations for the Different Measures (m±Sd).

Ethnicity	Culture adaptation	Culture maintenance	Ethnic identity	Multicultural identity
Ethnic minority Chinese (N = 70)	2.97 ± 1.10	4.56 ± 0.78	4.20 ± 0.61	3.98 ± 0.47
Han Chinese (N = 77)	3.50 ± 1.07	4.18 ± 0.51	3.98 ± 0.65	3.79 ± 0.49

5.1 Cultural Maintenance and Adaptation

Consistent with the first hypothesis, more ethnic minority Chinese, than Han Chinese, people emphasize cultural maintenance by Chinese ethnic minorities, $t(416) = 4.92$, $p < 0.001$; more Han Chinese people think that the Chinese ethnic minorities should adapt to Han culture, $t(416) = 5.87$, $p < 0.001$. Moreover, 80% of Han Chinese people argue that ethnic minority Chinese should adapt to Han Chinese culture, whereas only 33.8% of ethnic minority Chinese people agree with cultural adaptation.

The results reveal a substantial difference between Han and minority Chinese students’ attitudes toward maintaining ethnic cultures and adapting Han cultures. Students of Chinese ethnic minorities believe that each minority should preserve its own culture. Although 22.9% of the Han Chinese

students approve of the cultural maintenance of Chinese ethnic minorities, 5.7% are against it. Moreover, 95% of the minority Chinese students favor and 2.5% oppose. According to the data, the minority Chinese students exhibit no correlation between the preservation of their own ethnic culture and their adaptation to Han culture ($r = -0.02, p = 0.78$); for the Han Chinese students, a negative correlation (marginal salience) can be identified between their views on the cultural maintenance by Chinese ethnic minorities and the cultural adaptation by Chinese ethnic minorities to Han culture ($r = -0.125, p = 0.079$). These findings support the second hypothesis.

5.2 Ethnic Identity and Multicultural Identity

As illustrated in Table 1, in general, the ethnic minority Chinese students' attitude toward maintaining cultures by Chinese ethnic minorities and their ethnic identity is higher (their score is 4.20 on a 5-point scale) than that of Han Chinese (their score is 3.98 on a 5-point scale). The analysis on the correlations of the relationships between minority Chinese's ethnic identity and maintaining cultures by Chinese ethnic minorities ($r = 0.15, p < 0.05$) indicates that ethnic minority Chinese students' ethnic identity is positively related to cultural maintenance by Chinese ethnic minorities. As for the relationship between ethnic minority Chinese's multicultural identity and cultural adaptation to Han culture, a positive correlation exists between the degree of multicultural identity and the cultural adaptation by Chinese ethnic minorities to Han culture ($r=0.25, p < 0.001$). Thus, as is expected in the third hypothesis, ethnic minority Chinese's ethnic identification is positively related to maintaining cultures by Chinese ethnic minorities, and their multiculturalism endorsement is positively related to cultural adaptation by Chinese ethnic minorities to Han culture.

Table 1 also indicates that Han Chinese ethnic identity is positively related to their attitude toward the cultural adaptation by the Chinese ethnic minorities to Han culture ($r = 0.37, p < 0.001$), whereas Han Chinese's ethnic identity is not related to their attitude toward maintaining cultures by Chinese ethnic minorities to Han culture ($r = 0.04, p = 0.59$).

5.3 Regression Analyses

To further test the relationships among the attitude of the Han Chinese students toward adapting Han cultures by Chinese ethnic minorities to Han culture, the ethnic identity of the Han Chinese students, and their multicultural identity, we performed analysis using a two-dimensional model (REF) and examined the moderating effects of the data. The dependent variable in the analysis was the attitude of Han Chinese toward cultural adaptation by Chinese ethnic minorities to Han culture, whereas the ethnic identity of Han Chinese was the independent variable, and the multicultural identity of Han Chinese was the adjusting variable. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Moderating Effects On the Relationship between Han Chinese's Ethnic Identity and Their Attitude Toward Minority Chinese's Cultural Adaptation.

Constant		Standardized coefficients	<i>t</i>	Sig.	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² change
Step 1	Ethnic identity	0.34	5.16	0.000	0.173	
	Multicultural identity	-0.19	2.82	0.005		
Step 2	Ethnic identity	0.35	5.23	0.000	0.177	0.004
	Multicultural identity	-0.20	2.97	0.003		
	Product term	0.07	0.97	0.330		

As Table 2 suggests, the ethnic identity and the multicultural identity of the Han Chinese predict their attitudes toward cultural adaptation by Chinese ethnic minorities to Han culture in the positive and reverse directions, respectively.

The results also show that the multicultural identity of the Han Chinese plays a valuable role in regulating the relationship between their attitude toward cultural adaptation by Chinese ethnic minorities to Han culture and the ethnic identity of the Han Chinese ($\beta = 0.07, t = 0.97, p = 0.33$). The results support the fourth hypothesis.

6. Conclusion

Based on the acculturation model and SIT, the present study addresses whether the majority (Han Chinese) and minority (ethnic minority Chinese) group college students think that the ethnic minority Chinese students should place greater emphasis on maintaining cultures by Chinese ethnic minorities and less on adaptation to Han culture. In a multi-ethnic society, the Han and the ethnic minority college students belong to different social status groups. Han Chinese people often see the presence of the ethnic minority Chinese as a “difference,” leading them to conclude that the desire of the Chinese ethnic minorities to maintain their own culture is exceeding what is proper. Han Chinese often view the presence of ethnic minorities as a *difference*, leading them to conclude that the desire of China’s ethnic minorities to maintain their own culture goes beyond what is appropriate. A correlation study of this research is done to predict attitudes toward cultural maintenance and cultural adaptation by Chinese ethnic minorities to Han culture, seeing multiculturalism as the adjusting variable. Thus, it was not easy to determine the direction of identifying cause and effect. Thereafter, the causal relationships among cultural adaptation, cultural maintenance, ethnic identification, and multiculturalism still remain to be confirmed in future experimental or theoretical research.

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