The Immigrant Sibling:
An Exploration of Acculturation and Enculturation Profiles

by

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Abstract

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Acculturation and enculturation processes and sibling relationship quality are important constructs for understanding the psychosocial wellbeing of immigrant adolescents. In this paper, I used a mixed-method approach to (a) understand how similar or different siblings’ cultural orientations are (b) the role siblings may play in shaping one another’s cultural orientation, and (c) how changes in cultural orientation are related to sibling relationship quality. Quantitative data were collected from 31 sibling dyads adolescents at two time points, and qualitative data were collected from individual interviews with 16 young adults. Participants in both samples identified as having a Chinese cultural background and immigrated to Canada with their family before the age of 14. The results of the qualitative interviews suggested that siblings often perceived themselves as culturally similar, although the quantitative data was not congruent with the view. There was ample evidence that siblings influence one another’s cultural profiles. For example, in the quantitative data, higher cultural involvement by one sibling, especially in the Canadian dimension, predicted decreases in the other sibling’s involvement in that same domain 18-months later. These patterns were corroborated with themes derived through the interviews. The thematic analyses identified five factors that fostered similarities and differences in the cultural profiles of immigrant siblings and the perceived effects of such. The findings suggested that there are few cultural conflicts among siblings. Instead, siblings act as cultural mediators in parent-child conflicts, and they are in a unique position to understand and support each other. This study provided preliminary insight into how similar or different Chinese immigrant siblings are in a Canadian metropolitan context. Overall, the findings illustrate ways in which siblings play an important role in the family by supporting one another in adjusting to life in Canada.

*Keywords: siblings, immigration, acculturation, enculturation, sibling relationships, mixed-method approach*