

Masculinity/Femininity Influence Acculturation of Chinese International Students

Fei Xie & Deborah L. Best
Wake Forest University

Gender ideologies and acculturation

- **Acculturation** attitude could be understood from two dimensions: preference to maintain heritage culture and mainstream culture acculturation (Berry, 1996).
- **Girls** are more willing to embrace the mainstream culture, while **boys** are more willing to keep in touch with their heritage culture (Eisikovits, 2000)
- **Masculinity** requires toughness and competence, which may impede men's help seeking and emotion expression (Brenner, Vogek, Lannin & Strass, 2017).
- **Emotion suppression** impedes cross-cultural communication (Park et al., 2011). But reflective **emotion coping strategies** (emotion processing and expression) could induce masculinity threat (Hoyt et al., 2017).
- Mainstream acculturation is highly predicted by **English proficiency** (Dao et al., 2007; Yu & Shen, 2012). Females consistently surpass males in second language acquisition, while performing hegemonic masculinity may interfere with the language learning process (van der Silk et al., 2015; Qin, 2018).

Hypotheses

- Femininity is positively associated with mainstream acculturation, English proficiency and emotion-related variables, while masculinity has reversed pattern.
- English proficiency and emotion-related variables facilitate mainstream acculturation and mediate the effect of gender ideologies.

Measure

- **Demographics:** gender, age, education, job, relationship, year of stay, etc.
- **Masculinity/Femininity:** adjective checklist valid across cultures (25 words for each)
- **Cultural values:** Asian cultural values; selected dimensions from Hofstede's cultural dimensions.
- **Potential mediators:** help seeking threat; emotion suppression; emotion coping styles (emotion expression & emotion processing); English proficiency.
- **Adaptation & acculturation:** college stress; sociocultural adaptation; stress due to change; acculturation (mainstream & heritage culture)

Results

- 85 students with mean age = 23.23 (from 18 to 34). 66 females and 19 males.
- **No gender difference** in mainstream acculturation ($F = .27, p = .60$) or heritage acculturation ($F = .34, p = .56$), nor in other measured variables.
- **Femininity is not correlated with acculturation**, nor with emotion-related variables.
- **English proficiency and all emotion-related variables** are related with acculturation.
- **Masculinity positively predict mainstream culture acculturation, which is fully mediated by English proficiency** (see Table 2).
- The effect of masculinity on mainstream acculturation is **more significant for females** (see Table 3).

Table 2. Hierarchical regression predicting mainstream acculturation

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	β	p	R^2	β	p	R^2
			.11**			.31***
Gender	-.15	.16		-.25	.01	
Masculinity	.29	.03		.07	.51	
English Proficiency	-	-		.50	.00	

Table 3. Correlations for males (upper triangle) and females (lower triangle)

Variable	1	2	3
1. Masculinity	-	.50*	.16
2. English Proficiency	.41**	-	.53*
3. Accul Mainstream	.33**	.54**	-

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Males: upper triangle (n=19). Females: lower triangle (n=66).

Discussion

- In contrast to the previous study, no gender difference were found in acculturation, which could because of **the small number of male participants**.
- Instead of femininity, masculinity enhanced acculturation of Chinese students in the US by facilitating English proficiency. This could be accounted for by the **high achievement goal** comes with masculinity.
- Girls could also ascribe to masculinity and even benefit more than boys in a cross-cultural setting, indicating the **context-dependent outcomes of masculinity norms**.
- Alternative explanation: high attachment to **Anglo-American hegemonic masculine culture** leads to high English proficiency and masculine self-perception (Barber, 2011).
- Though not related with femininity, emotion coping skills have influence on acculturation. But why emotion suppression is negatively correlated with heritage culture attachment is yet to explore.

Table 1. Means and Correlations

Variable	Mean for M/F	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender	(N)19/66	-							
2. Masculinity	8.11/6.89	-.12	-						
3. Femininity	9.26/8.29	-.07	.62**	-					
4. Emo Suppress	4.54/3.48†	-.30**	-.06	-.06	-				
5. EmoCope Expr	2.87/2.98	.08	-.14	.01	-.39**	-			
6. EmoCope Proc	3.25/3.19	-.04	.08	.05	-.13	.25*	-		
7. English Pro	3.61/3.89	.14	.41**	.23*	-.24*	.21	.13	-	
8. Accul Main	4.76/4.37	-.18	.30**	.10	-.09	.20	.22*	.43**	-
9. Accul Heritage	5.27/5.40	-.08	.18	.21	-.22*	.26*	.16	.04	.20

Note. † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. M = male, F = female, N = number. Blue numbers are consistent with hypotheses, reds are not.