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The Medium Is the Message: WeChat, YouTube, and Facebook Usage and Acculturation Outcomes

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Pathways to Prosperity

November 9, 2021



Introduction

Immigrants represent 1 in 5 persons in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2018).

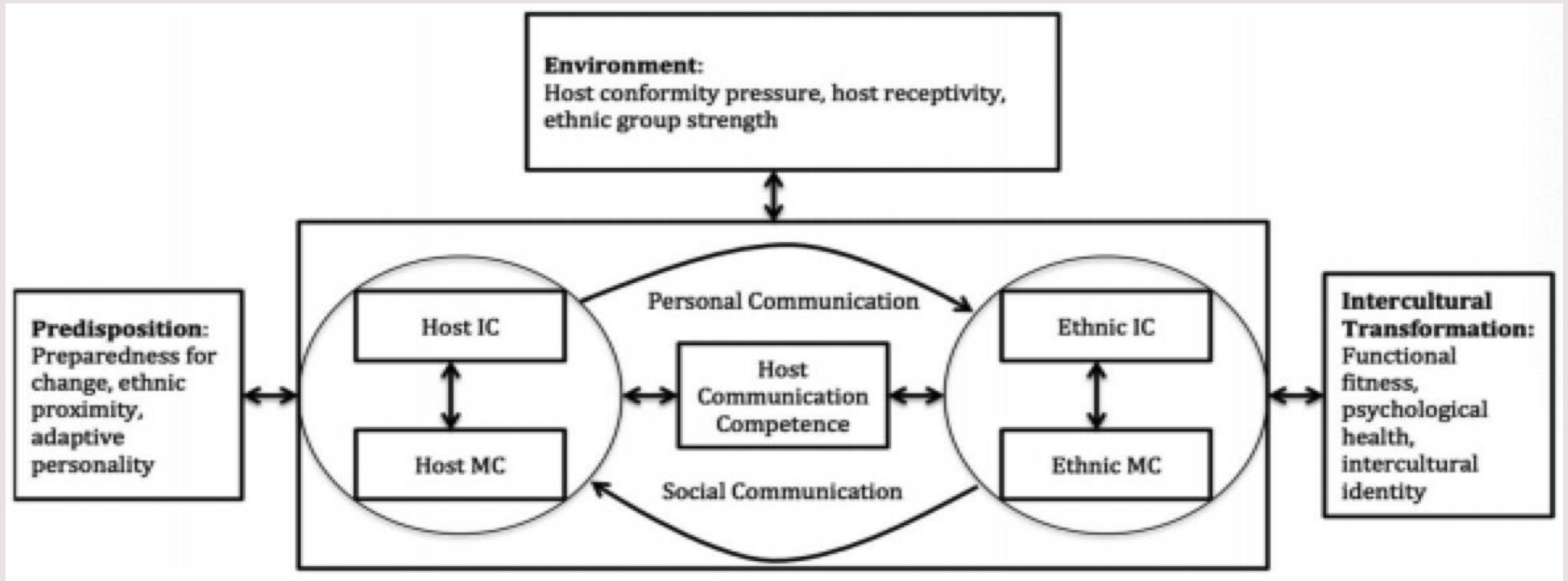
China is among the top three source countries for immigrants in Canada (Hussen, 2018).

Chinese immigrants may struggle more with acculturation due to perceived cultural distance (Galchenko & Van De Vijver, 2007) and language barriers.

Social media is an important tool for immigrants to stay connected with their home country (Wang, 2018) and the host country (Croucher, 2011; Schuter, 2012).

Literature Review


Interactive theory of communication and across-cultural adaptation (ITCCA; Kim, 2001)



Literature Review

Gap 1: Most of the studies focus on international students' experience

Gap 2: Add social media as another component of social communication in the ITCCA



**Overarching
Research
Questions**

RQ 1: How do Chinese immigrants use social media in their acculturation process?

RQ 2: What is the relation between social media usage and acculturation outcomes?

Phase One: Focus Groups

To understand the social media use of Chinese immigrants in Calgary using an exploratory, qualitative approach

To inform the development of Phase Two

Focus Groups: Method

Three face-to-face focus groups with eight participants in each ($N = 24$; conducted in February 2020)

1.5 hours per focus group

Consecutive interpretation between Mandarin and English; Audio-recorded

Demographic survey at the end

Focus Group Participants

- 24 participants (10 women, 14 men) from mainland China
- Lived in Canada for 10 years or less (average of 4.4 years)
- Average age 47.54 (range 23-81)
- Majority were university-educated; half were employed
- Most immigrated through economic or family categories
- On a 4-point scale (1=*poor*, 4=*excellent*), participants self-reported a relatively low level of English proficiency: **1.79** (SD = 0.80)

Focus Groups Results: Use of Social Media

**“WeChat can satisfy 90%
of my needs.”**



Focus Groups Results: Social Media Impacts on Acculturation

In my opinion,
social media has
two sides.

It (WeChat) is
good and bad at
the same time.

Talking about hinderance, I
do feel WeChat is a big
obstacle to communicate
with locals. Because I,
myself, just like this
comfort zone so much, and
want to stay in and don't
want to come out.

Phase Two: Survey

To understand the social media usage patterns among Chinese immigrants

To test the association among different social media usage and acculturation outcomes (psychological and sociocultural adaptation, language proficiency, and identification)

From Focus Group to Survey

Social media platforms

- WeChat, YouTube, Facebook

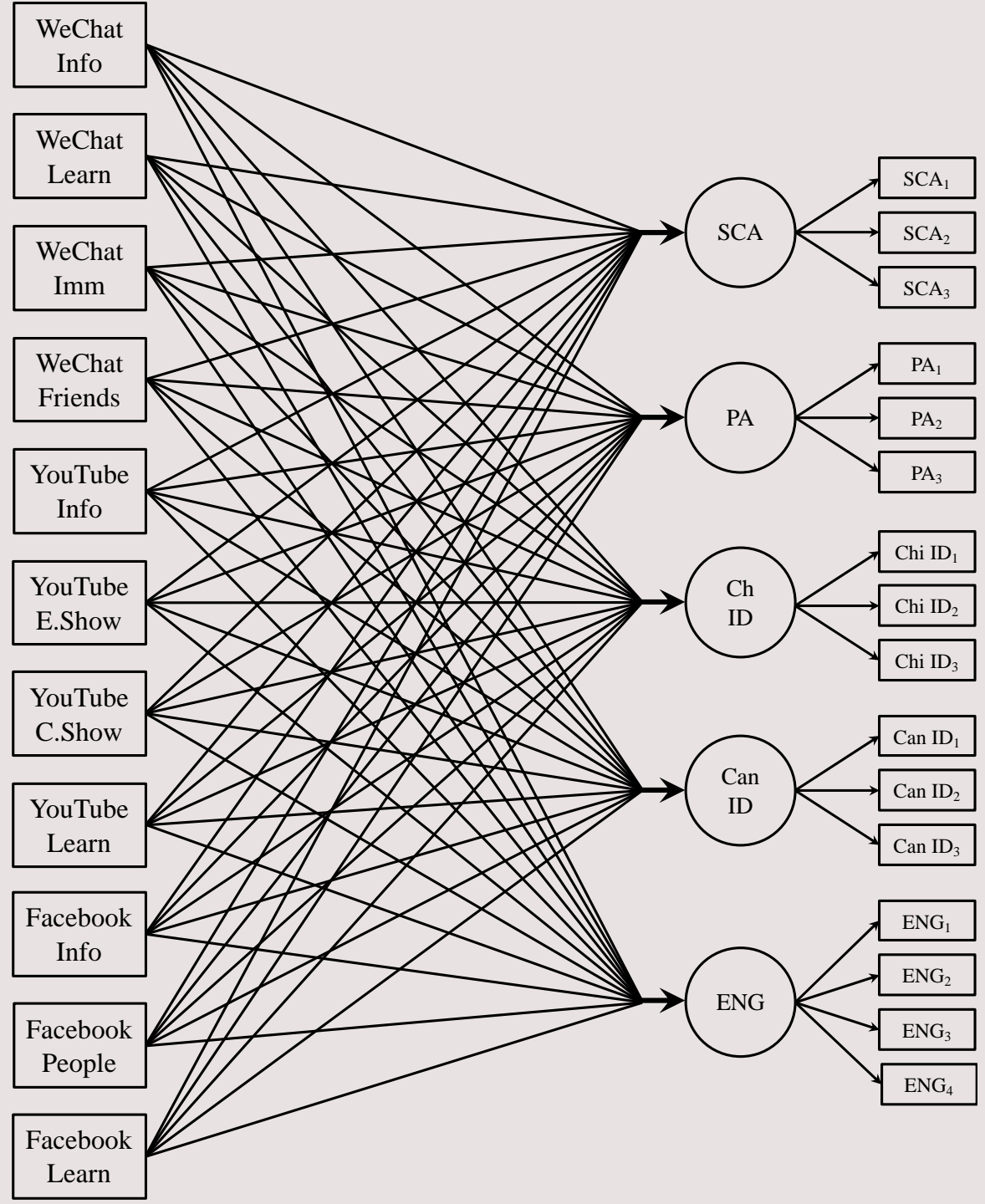
Specific use of social media

- To connect interpersonally (host and ethnic), to collect information(host and ethnic), to learn English, to watch shows (YouTube)

Measurement of the specific use of each social media (11-item)

- I use WeChat to read information about Canada

The Proposed Model



Survey Method

Two versions of survey questionnaires (English and Mandarin)

Likert-type Scales and demographic questions

Online survey (survey monkey)

Participants recruited through partner organization and WeChat

Survey Data Analytical Strategy

Frequency analysis

- Usage patterns of social media in acculturation

Structural equation modeling (SEM)

- Test relations between different social media usage and acculturation outcomes while controlling possible confounding variables (language proficiency, length of time in Canada)

Survey Results: Using WeChat

Learn English

- Negatively related to sociocultural adaptation and English skills
- Positively related to Chinese identification

Connect to Family and Friends:

- Positively related to Chinese identification and Canadian identification
- Positively related to psychological adaptation

Survey

Results: Using YouTube & Facebook

Using YouTube to Learn English and Obtain Host Country Information

- Positively related to psychological adaptation

Using Facebook to Obtain Host Country Information

- Positively related to psychological adaptation

Theoretical Implications

Each social media platform should be examined using specific communication activities

- Obtaining information on YouTube/Facebook positively related to psychological adaptation, same activity on WeChat has no relation

New dynamic to acculturation and communication

- Social media ethnic interpersonal communication positively related to host country identification

Practical Implications

Inform future settlement programming

- Encourage newcomers to avoid WeChat for language acquisition
- Agencies can create their own virtual language platforms/Apps, or YouTube channels

Pre- and post-arrival programs can harness social media to provide information about the receiving country.

- It is important to ensure such information is accurate and helps to foster realistic expectations about life in the receiving country

Acknowledgments

RAs: Siyin Liang (U of C), Lauren Trelford (MRU)

Calgary Chinese Dongbei Association

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*This study was supported by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Partnership Engage Grant (SSHRC-PEG) No. 892-2019-2005.



Questions?