

## **An Investigation into the Acculturation Strategies Of Chinese Students in Germany**

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### **Abstract**

This paper aims to find out preferences in acculturation strategies among Chinese students in Germany and provide insights into their cultural awareness in terms of the social and psychosocial adaptation factors. The acculturation strategies investigated in the study were assimilation, integration, marginalization and separation. Data were collected from questionnaires. The data reveal that both integration and separation are the preferred acculturation strategies. Males prefer separation while females predominantly choose integration. The findings suggest that the acculturation patterns of Chinese students in Germany are characterized by unique cross-cultural traits due to the social and psychological distances of the two countries.

**Keywords:** Acculturation strategies, Chinese students in Germany, integration, separation, assimilation, marginalization

### **Introduction**

In recent years, an increasing number of Chinese students are studying abroad in different Western countries. According to a recent report from its Ministry of Education, China is the No. 1 source country for international students, with 118,500 in 103 countries across the world in 2005, and the number of Chinese overseas students has been mounting year after year, e.g., with a 3.3% of increase in 2005 over 2004 (Liu, 2009). The figure is so large that some researchers have attached importance to the various aspects of their daily life in the receiving society such as life status, psychology, and social relations. Yet, there has been little systematic study on Chinese overseas students in Germany. According to the official statistics from the Education Office, Embassy of People's Republic of China in Germany (Liu, 2009), there were about 26,000 Chinese students in Germany in 2009, and during 2005-2009, their number increased by about 50%, which has made Chinese students the largest group among all the international students in Germany.

Students are undergoing major psychological and sociocultural changes, especially when they are adapting to a sharply different culture from their native one. Overseas students have different degrees of acculturation to the cultures where they are living, and different degrees of acculturation result in different levels of psychological well-being and life satisfaction. The challenges international students face may stem from studying pressure, social adjustment and

unfamiliarity with the new surroundings (Berry, 1997; Berry et al., 2006).

Research conducted so far is mainly carried out on adult immigrants in the multicultural society in the West, especially in North America (Berry, 2001). Chinese students in Germany, who may have their particular characteristics, are worthy of further study. Besides the fact that they are experiencing difficulties such as language barrier, homesickness, and getting used to a new culture and social system, acculturation in Germany may present different traits from other Western countries like America owing to the distinctive German culture.

It is thus significant to realize that some factors are influencing the acculturation process. There is at present a need to start a research project to investigate the acculturation strategies of Chinese overseas students in Germany to understand their choice of various strategies as well as factors associated with their acculturation mode. Therefore, the present survey has two research objectives: to find out the preferences of acculturation strategies among Chinese overseas students in Germany and to investigate factors associated with the acculturation strategies of these students. Relevant research questions are raised below.

- 1) What are the predominant acculturation strategies among Chinese overseas students in Germany?
- 2) What factors are contributing to their preferences of acculturation strategies?
- 3) What implications can we draw from the acculturation patterns of Chinese students in Germany?

### **Acculturation and Acculturation Strategies**

#### **Acculturation and Its Conceptual Development**

The term “acculturation” was introduced by American anthropologists, as early as in 1880, to describe the process of culture changes between two different cultural groups who come in contact with each other (Rudmin, 2003). The first scientists to study acculturation were sociologists and anthropologists who were interested in group-level changes following migration. The first definition of acculturation was proffered by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits in 1936:

Acculturation comprehends those phenomena, which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups. (Redfield et al., 1936, p.149)

Acculturation now represents one of the major areas of investigation in cross-cultural psychology. In today’s view, acculturation is the process of cultural and psychological change that follows intercultural contact (Berry et al., 2006). Cultural changes include alterations in a group’s customs, and in their economic and political life. Psychological changes include alterations in individuals’ attitudes toward the acculturation process, their cultural identities, and their social behaviors in relation to the groups in contact (Phinney, 1992). The eventual adaptations also have core psychological features, including a person’s well-being and social

skills needed to function in their culturally complex daily world. Ward (2001) proposes that there are two distinct dimensions of adapting to the host society. The first one, termed as psychological adaptation, refers to personal well-being and good mental health. The second, sociocultural adaptation, refers to the individuals' social competence in managing their daily life in the intercultural setting. Acculturation therefore basically entails learning to deal with a new cultural situation.

The psychology of intercultural adaptation was first discussed by Plato. Plato argued that acculturation could cause social disorder and was the first to suggest types of acculturation policies and to describe people who tried to isolate themselves as having disordered personalities (Rudmin, 2003). To some extent, the history of Western civilization is also a history of acculturation.

Acculturation is marked by physical and psychological changes due to the adaptation required in diet, climate, housing, interaction styles, norms, and values of a new society (Berry, 1997). When a successful adaptation is not achieved, acculturative stress may arise, which refers to a form of stress that is identified as having its source in the process of acculturation. The amount of acculturative stress and subsequent adaptation problems are assumed to be influenced by a number of factors, which operate on individual or group levels (Berry, 2002). The concept of psychological acculturation primarily refers to individual level changes in identity, values, attitudes, habits and the like. Acculturation studies tend to conceptualize individual changes either as a coping mechanism to a stressful situation induced by the encounter with an unfamiliar cultural context, or as a need on the part of an individual to learn specific cultural skills so as to thrive and survive in a given cultural context (Berry et al., 1987). At the individual level, two different factors are distinguished: features prior to acculturation, like the age, gender, education, cultural distance and language, and features during the acculturation, such as acculturation strategies, attitudes and behaviors, etc. (Berry, 2001).

Acculturation is now defined as the process an individual needs to go through to become adapted to a different culture, which requires the immigrants to adjust their social and psychological behavior to become more closely integrated with the target society. For this to take place immigrants have to change in both social and psychological behaviors (Byram, 2000, p. 1).

Acculturation deals with how sojourners or new immigrants experience the distress caused by mismatches or incompatibility between the host culture and the culture of birth (Ohnishi et al., 1999). The outcomes may include not only changes to the existing model, but also some novel reactions generated by the process of cultural interaction. Acculturation is conceived to be positively correlated with successful adaptation to the target society. From this perspective, acculturation is regarded as the evidence that the individual has successfully adjusted to the new environment and become a member of the mainstream society, demonstrating competence in social and occupational functioning (Shen, 2001).

Since individuals may have to step out of their comfort zone and confront cultural differences to have meaningful inter-group communication, coexistence does not necessarily imply interactions. Emotional distress is dependent on a number of cultural group and individual variables which enter into the acculturation process (Berry et al., 1987). The amount of acculturative stress and subsequent adaptation problems are assumed to be influenced

by a number of factors, which operate on personal or societal levels. These factors include personality and cognitive factors (such as self-esteem and cognitive style), personal variables (such as gender and ethnicity) and even macro social and political factors (such as the degree of cultural pluralism extant in the wider society) (Berry, 1997). In this regard, some comparative research demonstrates that attitudes toward acculturation are particularly significant predictors of acculturative stress (Barry, 2001).

Where the target culture involves a different language, a key part of the acculturation process will be closely related to target language learning. As a generally accepted view, the fact that many of the learners fail to master the target language is associated with their isolation and lack of social contact with the host population (Byram, 2000, p. 1). The eventual adaptations also have core psychological features, including a person's well-being and social skills needed to function in their culturally complex daily world (Ward, 2001).

### **Acculturation Strategies**

Two influential models of acculturation have been proposed in the previous literature, depending on whether acculturation is seen as a unidimensional or a bidimensional process. The best-known unidimensional model has been proposed by Wood (1969). It assumes that acculturation is a process of change in the direction of the mainstream culture. Migrants may differ in the speed of the process, but the outcome invariably is adaptation to the mainstream culture (Van de Vijver & Phalet, 2004).

Beginning in the 1970s, Berry (1974) proposed that there are two independent dimensions underlying the process of acculturation: individuals' links to their cultures of origin and to their societies of settlement. These links can be manifested in a number of ways, including preferences for involvement in the two cultures (termed as acculturation attitudes), and in the behaviors that they engage in (e.g., their language knowledge and use, and social relationships).

In recent decades unidimensional models of change have come under critical discussion considering the fact that migrants prefer other options than pursuing complete adjustment, either by developing a bicultural identity or by retaining the original culture without extensively adjusting to the society of settlement. In line with these societal developments, bidimensional models have gradually replaced the unidimensional models of acculturation (Van de Vijver & Phalet, 2004).

In multicultural societies, individuals and groups need to work out how to live together, adopting various strategies that will allow them to achieve a reasonably successful adaptation to the new culture as well as society. Many modern acculturation theories claim that ethnic minorities, including immigrants, refugees, and sojourners can favor either the dominant culture, or their own minority culture, or both, or neither (Van de Vijver & Phalet, 2004).

In the framework of the bidimensional models of acculturation, two issues are raised: the degree to which people wish to maintain their heritage culture and identity; and the degree to which people seek involvement with the larger society. When these two issues are crossed, an acculturation space is created with four sectors within which individuals may express how they are seeking to acculturate. Berry (1997) and his colleagues developed this two-dimensional model of acculturation, which provides a framework for the study of acculturation attitudes.

He proposes two critical issues that determine the type of acculturation: (a) the extent to which individuals consider it of value to identify with and maintain the cultural characteristics of their own ethnic groups, and (b) the importance one attributes to maintaining positive relationships with the larger society and other ethnic groups (Berry et al., 1987). In accordance with the fourfold acculturation theory developed by Berry and his associates, the four generic types of acculturation strategies are now commonly labeled (a) assimilation ( $-M+D$ ), (b) separation ( $+M-D$ ), (c) integration ( $+M+D$ ), and (d) marginalization ( $-M-D$ ) (Rudmin, 2003). Specifically speaking, assimilation is the strategy when there is little interest in cultural maintenance combined with a preference for interacting with the larger society. Separation is the strategy when cultural maintenance is sought while avoiding involvement with others. Marginalization exists when neither cultural maintenance nor interaction with others is sought. Integration is present when both cultural maintenance and involvement with the larger society are sought.

Social indicators of psychological health and life quality suggest that most of the immigrants have good adaptation, and so it is expected that the most preferred strategy is integration and the least marginalization. Previous studies (Berry et al., 2006) have suggested that integration is the most preferred and produces the best results in the immigrant's adaptation during acculturation. Marginalization produces the worst results in the immigrant's adaptation. Although integration appears the most preferred strategy, it is believed that the differences in the use of strategies might be based on differences in features existing prior to acculturation; closeness between cultures, cultural plurality in the origin culture, level of education, perception of the origin culture or their cultural identity, language, age and gender.

Moreover, the four strategies are actually four points in a continuum. They are not static but dynamic and are not clear-cut from each other. The predictors of choosing acculturation strategies are quite similar; however, different degrees of adopting these predictors determine their strategies. The changes of the degree can contribute to the changes of acculturation strategy. Thus, different people have different strategies; even the same person, in different stages of acculturation, may reveal different strategies. Therefore, the author only confines the participants of this survey to a certain group of people, whose choices are comparatively stable.

## Research Methods and Procedures

A self-report questionnaire was developed in regard to the research objectives and focuses for the present study. Since the related scale is not available from the published literature, the authors wrote an e-mail to Berry and obtained his consent to use this scale in the survey. So, the present study partly replicates the project of International Comparative Studies of Ethnocultural Youth (ICSEY). Participants are sixty-four Chinese overseas students who are currently studying at colleges and universities in Germany. About one hundred Chinese students from mainly East German areas got together in Magdeburg, Germany in winter, 2006. The authors took advantage of the opportunity and handed out the questionnaires. During the days of their staying there, most students had enough time to finish the questionnaire attentively, so they didn't answer the questions at random or without careful thinking. Altogether one hundred copies were distributed and among the retrieved ones, sixty-four were complete and valid.

According to the statistics, 78% of the participants come from former East Germany. The age of the participants ranges from twenty to thirty-four ( $M = 26.7$ ,  $SD = 11.5$ ). The average age is 26.7, with fifty-one of them (79.7%) under thirty. Thirty-one (48.4%) of them are females while the other thirty-four (51.6%) males. The average length of residence is 4.16 years ( $SD = 1.86$ ), with 29.5% indicating less than 1 year of residence in Germany. All of the participants speak German as their second language and Chinese as their native language. They all have passed the DSH test before entering universities in Germany. DSH stands for “Deutsche Sprachprüfung für Hochschulen”, a German language testing system testing proficiency in German as a foreign language.

Except the demographics, all other items reported here were answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). In German practice, 1 point always stands for the best or highest mark, whereas 5 point means a low score, so here 1 stands for “strongly agree” in accordance with the German rule of scales.

In order to minimize language difficulties and increase response rates, the questionnaire is made available in both Chinese and English. The English version is developed first and then translated into Chinese. The items are randomly ordered and assess a wide range of variables related to acculturation and adaptation.

The questionnaire contains altogether fifty-eight questions covering the following parts to test various constructs related to acculturation. Besides demographic features, the whole questionnaire is divided into three parts, among which the first section is designed to elicit the different preferences of the acculturation strategies, Section B is designed to look into linguistic proficiency, attitudes and motivations about target language learning and the last section is focused on some sociocultural adjustment factors concerning culture shock and acculturative stress.

The questionnaire is composed of the following sub-scales.

**1) Demographics:** This part includes the variables about the personal information. Five questions are developed to obtain background information about the participants, including gender, age, resident city, arrival time and length of residence in Germany.

**2) Acculturation strategies:** This is a twenty-eight-item scale modified by the authors, based on both Berry's original scale in ICSEY as well as a new scale for measuring acculturation of East Asians: the East Asian Acculturation Measure (EAAM). The EAAM is a 29-item self-report inventory, which measures Berry's four dimensions of acculturation: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. In fact, the EAAM is also mostly based on Berry's (1990) scale, yet modified according to the contemporary situations and characteristics of the East Asian people from China, Japan and Korea. The findings suggest that the EAAM may demonstrate adequate validity and reliability, and shows promise as a useful tool for clinicians and researchers to investigate the acculturation patterns of East Asian immigrants (Barry, 2001).

Though the EAAM is also the proper measurement for the present study, the authors refer to Berry's scale and change several items to make it both appropriate to the Chinese students in Germany and the concept of acculturation strategies postulated by Berry himself.

The Scale assesses the four acculturation strategies in each of six domains: marriage, cultural traditions, language, social activities, friends and music. Participants were asked about their social interaction and communication styles with German and ethnic peers, in a variety of different settings. The authors substitute “Chinese” for all “Asians” and “Germans” for all “Americans” from the original text. Examples of items in each of the sub-scale are: “I get along better with Germans than Chinese” (assimilation); “I prefer going to social gatherings where most people are Chinese” (separation); “I feel very comfortable around both Germans and Chinese” (integration) and “Sometimes I feel that Chinese and Germans do not accept me” (marginalization). A mean score can be calculated for each participant on each of the four acculturation strategies. Their mean scores are then used to compute the overall score for each acculturation strategy.

**3) Language proficiency:** In this section, items are designed to elicit three kinds of information about the target language acquisition: 1) a self-assessment of German language ability in reading, writing, listening, and speaking; 2) a self-assessment of German language learning confidence; and 3) the various purposes for German learning and the learners’ motivation. A lower score indicates a more positive evaluation of self-German proficiency and higher confidence in target language learning, and more preference for language learning, respectively.

The target language proficiency is assessed with six items in which the students self-evaluate their proficiency in the German language. This is an adaptation of a school adjustment scale developed by Berry and his colleagues from ICSEY questionnaire. The six questions are raised to evaluate whether the Chinese students have difficulties in understanding and their real-life communicative German competence in academic and various social settings. Respondents report on the extent of difficulties experienced in understanding lectures, daily conversation, writing academic papers, general strain from studies, and the degree of overall evaluation of language proficiency. An example is, “I can talk with German people in fluent German.”

**4) Language learning motivation:** The questionnaire is modified on the basis of Hashimoto’s (2002) questionnaire. It is a revised language learning questionnaire adapted from Gardner’s (2001) questionnaire. The attitude and motivation questionnaire designed by Gardner includes three sub-scales: attitude toward learning L2, motivation intensity and desire to learn the target language.

**5) Cultural identity:** Two forms of social group identity are assessed in this section: Chinese identity and German identity. Ethnic identity is assessed by using five items drawn from the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992). It includes statements such as “I feel I am part of (ethnic) culture,” and “Being part of (ethnic) culture is embarrassing to me”.

The scale focused on ethnic pride and maintenance assessed using some of the indicators proposed by Berry et al. (1987), Donà and Berry (1994), and Neto (2002). Participants are asked to rate their degree of involvement in each of the following activities: language, food preference, social groups, music preference and degree of assimilation to the host culture. An example of an item from this scale is “I love Chinese culture, history and traditions.” These

measures were used to assess the degree of cultural maintenance and the amount of acculturative experience with German society.

**6) Social adaptation:** This scale is based on Ward and Kennedy's (1999) work with the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale. Lower scores represent greater social difficulty in negotiating with the host culture. In the original questionnaire of ICSEY, the 10-item Rosenberg (1965) self-esteem inventory is an important part to assess the psychological adaptation and acculturative stress of the immigrant adolescents. However, in the present survey, the 10 items Rosenberg self-esteem inventory are omitted because they are viewed as less relevant to the research objective of the study, for the present study attaches more importance to sociocultural factors than psychological factors. Five questions are posed to evaluate the degree of stress and anxiety when the participants initially experience the German culture. Situations related to cultural shock are listed and also the scale data on the psychosocial well-being and social adaptation are collected.

**7) Symptoms outcome:** This part consists of five items, assessing the depression, anxiety and psychosomatic symptoms of the students. The items are developed by referring to the ICSEY project and depression scales from Robinson, Shaver, and Wrightsman (1991). Participants respond to the items "I feel tired", "I feel tense and anxious" and "I feel lonely", corresponding to the depression, anxiety and psychosomatic symptoms respectively.

**8) Stressful experience adaptation:** This scale is developed by referring to Neto's questionnaire, based on Furnham and Bochner's (2001) work on the Social Situations Questionnaire (Neto, 2002). Five items assess the amount of difficulty experienced in a variety of social situations (e.g., making friends, and racism). Higher scores are indicative of greater social difficulty in negotiating with the host culture, i.e., poorer social adaptation.

After generating the draft questionnaire, the authors sent it to three Chinese students in Cottbus, Germany to obtain feedback and check its clarity and fitness for further modifications. Minor revisions were made as a result of the pilot study. When filling in the questionnaire, the respondents are assured the information they provide is kept confidential. After being completed, the questionnaires are collected and sent back to China, where the authors processed the results and analyzed the raw data.

## Data Analysis

There are altogether fifty-eight variables in the questionnaire. It is of great importance to categorize all the items to different categories and clarify the relationships between the items to test their reliability and validity. The questionnaire is divided into three parts: acculturation strategies, language proficiency and language learning motivation, sociocultural and psychological adjustment factors.

### Preference of acculturation strategies.

Section A of the questionnaire is aimed at identifying participants' preference of acculturation strategies. Twenty-eight items are sorted into four big variables in accordance to the four big

categories, as shown in Table 1. In other words, Section A is simplified by classification in terms of the indication of different strategies. Each single strategy can be processed as one factor for further analysis.

This part is exclusive of the other items concerning acculturative factors, and the items are from original items by Berry in ICSEY (Berry et al., 2006) and EAAM by Barry (Barry, 2001). The reliability and validity of the scales are accurately tested in their previous studies. Therefore, this section is not processed in factor analysis. The distribution of their preferences for the acculturation strategies and their most preferred strategies are reported separately in the following table.

Table 1. Distribution of the Preference for the Acculturation Strategies

Strategy	Frequency	Percent(%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Integration	46	46.9	46.9
Separation	45	45.9	92.8
Assimilation	5	5.1	97.9
Marginalization	1	1.0	98.9
None	1	1.0	100

As a result of the computation and classification, five respondents are included in the assimilation category, forty-five in the separation category, forty-six in the integration category, one respondent in the marginalization category, and even one classified in none of the categories. As shown in Table 1, the frequency of choosing the four types of strategies is ninety-seven, the preference for integration constituting nearly half of the choices (46.9%), and separation accounting for 45.9%. Assimilation was preferred by five students (5.1%) and marginalization accounted for only one percent.

Noticeably, most students choose integration as their predominant strategy of acculturation, and at the same time they adopt separation as well. These statistics show that the majority of the students do not intentionally integrate into or separate from the German society. They keep a certain distance away from the German society and may keep a good balance between the German group and the Chinese group. They neither typically adopt integration nor separation. However, still about one third of the students sway between these two cultures when they don't know how to choose. And in this current survey, there is an extreme case preferring none of these acculturation strategies.

### **Analysis of the factors.**

Section B of the Questionnaire, including sixteen items, is designed to define the variables which influence participants' preferred mode of acculturation. From the rotated component matrix, altogether five factors have been extracted after calculating. The rotated component matrix is the outcome of rotating the component matrix by using Varimax rotation. The purpose is to further differentiate the loading of each component, and to make it easier to tell which items go to which factor. According to the property shared by the several items, the five factors are defined as Self-evaluated Language Proficiency, Integrative Language Learning

Motivation, Language Learning Anxiety, Language Confidence and Instrumental Language Learning Motivation.

Section C contains fourteen variables. The rotated component matrix clearly shows that four factors have been extracted. All of the items for acculturative stress load most heavily on component one, the items for physical symptoms load most heavily on component two. The items for cultural identity load most heavily on component three and four respectively, in which two items present more properties about host country identity while the other two present the ethnic identity, i.e. traditional Chinese culture maintenance. When items loading most heavily on component one are closely examined, it appears that they are all about communicating in informal situations. For example, No. 50 and 51, which load most heavily on component one, are asking whether the participants are feeling tired, tense or anxious in Germany. The outcome symptoms caused by failure of adaptation or difficulty in acculturation are evaluated, which can be also viewed as culture shock symptoms. The output four factors are labeled as psychological stress, physical symptoms, German identity, and Chinese identity by considering the logical relationship among items which belong to the same factor, and by referring to the aspects of investigation when the questionnaires are designed.

After factor analysis for Section B and C, what the items aim to test is validated, and the thirty variables are simplified to nine factors. Table 2 is a summary of the categorization of the factors after factor analysis.

Table 2. A summary of all the factors

	Label	Questionnaire Items
<b>F1</b>	Language Proficiency	35. Generally speaking, I have high German language proficiency 36. I can talk with German people in fluent German. 37. I can participate in class discussion in fluent German. 42. I find memorizing German vocabulary easy. 43. I find understanding German grammar easy. 44. I fear to deal with official affairs on my own because of the language barrier.
<b>F2</b>	Integrative Learning Motivation	29. I study German well in order to be integrated into German society. 30. I study German well in order to make more foreign friends. 31. I study German well in order to understand German culture. 33. Studying German well is very important to both my studying and living.
<b>F3</b>	Language Anxiety	38. I feel it is very difficult to understand what my German teachers and friends say. 39. It is extremely difficult for me to write my thesis in German.
<b>F4</b>	Language Confidence	40. I can speak German without worrying about mistakes. 41. I can write German without worrying about mistakes.

<b>F5</b>	Instrumental Learning Motivation	32. I study German well only for the sake of study. 34. It is very important for me to study both Chinese and German well.
<b>F6</b>	Physical Symptoms	50. Physically, I feel tired. 51. In my daily life, I feel tense and anxious. 52. I feel lonely even if I am with people. 53. I often feel helpless in dealing with problems of my life. 56. I feel unaccepted by the German people I know.
<b>F7</b>	Psychological Stress	58. I sometimes find it hard to socialize with people. 57. I feel uneasy when I am with people. 49. I sometimes find it hard to make friends. 54. I am not used to the pace of life here. 55. I am threatened by belonging to different ethnic groups.
<b>F8</b>	Chinese Identity	47. I love Chinese culture, history and traditions. 48. Being part of the Chinese culture is embarrassing to me.
<b>F9</b>	German Identity	45. I prefer to be dressed in Western styles. 46. I prefer Western music to Chinese music.

### Reliability of the questionnaire.

In this section, the Cronbach  $\alpha$  coefficient of each factor is worked out by the SPSS reliability analysis program. The reliability coefficients indicate the degree to which the results on a scale can be considered internally consistent or reliable. The Cronbach alpha is used in this study, ranging from .00 to 1.00, which is an indicator to show the internal consistency of one instrument. The higher the coefficient, the more reliable the instrument. In this survey, the items belonging to an individual factor are first processed in reliability analysis, and then all the items are processed to test the reliability of the factor. Table 3 and 4 present the result of processing reliability analysis of the nine factors and the whole questionnaire.

As to the specific nine factors extracted by factor analysis, the Cronbach  $\alpha$  coefficients for the nine factors range from 0.632 to 0.810. Most scales had satisfactory to good reliability, and these alpha coefficients demonstrated adequate inter-item consistency for each of the nine factors.

Table 3. Reliability Coefficients of All the Nine Factors

No	Factor	No. of Items	Alpha
1	Language Proficiency	6	.779
2	Integrative Learning Motivation	4	.694
3	Language Anxiety	2	.680
4	Language Confidence	2	.638
5	Instrumental Learning Motivation	2	.632
6	Physical Symptoms	5	.810
7	Psychological Stress	5	.732
8	Chinese Identity	2	.711
9	German Identity	2	.696

From Table 4, it can be easily found that the overall alpha reaches 0.727. Therefore, all these fifty-eight items are highly reliable as a whole. These statistics show that the items in each factor and the questionnaire as a whole have good internal consistency; the questionnaire is reliable to investigate the research questions.

Table 4. Reliability Statistics of the Whole Questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No. of Items
.727	.701	58

### Demographic features and the preference of acculturation strategies.

This section concentrates on the relationships between demographic features and their preference of acculturation strategies. As the basic personal information is requested in the beginning of the questionnaires, relationships between them are investigated by descriptive analysis. The distribution of acculturation strategies is first sorted according to the participants' gender, and the descriptive statistics are shown in Table 5. Altogether there are thirty-one females and thirty-four males. Among them, nineteen males have shown their preferences for integration, accounting for 55.9% of all the male participants, while twenty-seven females out of thirty-one have chosen integration, reaching 87.1% of the total females. Conversely, twenty-seven males have shown their preferences for separation, accounting for 79.4% of all the male participants, while eighteen females out of thirty-one have chosen separation, accounting for 58.1 % of the female students. The other two strategies gain few followers and indicate the rare popularity compared to integration and separation.

It is obvious from the statistics that the males and females are exactly contrary in terms of their adoption of integration and separation. Females predominantly choose integration as their preferred strategy while males are inclined to separate, which is not consistent with previous studies.

Table 5. Distribution of Acculturation Strategies by Gender

Acculturation Strategy	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Integration	19	55.9	27	87.1
Separation	27	79.4	18	58.1
Assimilation	2	5.9	3	9.6
Marginalization	1	2.9	0	0
None	1	2.9	0	0

### Correlation analysis between acculturation strategies.

In this section, correlation analysis is processed between the acculturation strategies and the nine factors extracted from the factor analysis in the early steps, in order to identify whether there is any statistically significant relationships between them. For instance, the result of

correlation analysis shows that the Pearson correlation coefficient between Marginalization and Psychological Stress is 0.703, indicating there is a positive high linear correlation between them. The significance is 0.000, showing their correlation is statistically significant and the probability that they are not correlated is nearly zero. Two asterisks on the upper right corner of the coefficient demonstrate that the significance level reaches 0.01. The high co-efficiency proves that students who are marginalized are those who probably experience higher psychological stress and suffer more from mental problems.

The correlations between the four acculturation strategies are shown in Table 6. Assimilation is significantly positively correlated with integration ( $r = .414, p < 0.01$ ) but significantly negatively correlated with separation ( $r = -.463, p < 0.01$ ). Thus, the more likely the students are assimilated, the more they are likely to be integrated and the less likely to be separated. In the same way, significant negative correlations are found between separation and assimilation ( $-.463^{**}$ ) and integration ( $-.547^{**}$ ) while significant positive correlations are found between separation and marginalization ( $.294^{*}$ ). Integration is negatively correlated with marginalization ( $r = -.302, p < 0.05$ ). The more the students are integrated into the target society, the less they seem to be marginalized.

Table 6 Correlations between each acculturation strategy

		Assimilation	Separation	Integration	Marginalization
Assimilation	Pearson Correlation	1	-.463(**)	.414(**)	.214
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.001	.089
Separation	Pearson Correlation	-.463(**)	1	-.547(**)	.294(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.018
Integration	Pearson Correlation	.414(**)	-.547(**)	1	-.302(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000		.015
Marginalization	Pearson Correlation	.214	.294(*)	-.302(*)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.089	.018	.015	

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

## Results and Discussion

Since this survey examines how Chinese students acculturate in German society, some traits characterized by this group are identified and explored based on the findings. The reasons for the difference in the choices of acculturation strategies, the factors related to each of the strategies and the distinctive features of the acculturation patterns of the participants are discussed below.

### Preferences of Acculturation Strategies

The fundamental research question of the survey is to find out the predominant acculturation strategies of the Chinese overseas students in Germany. It is significant to observe that both

integration and separation are the predominant strategies chosen by the students, which is not consistent with other studies in this field. A lot of empirical studies carried out on different ethnic groups in different countries confirm that integration is the only predominant acculturation strategy adopted by overseas students. ICSEY conducted a survey among immigrant youth in 13 immigrant-receiving countries and the results indicate that integration is the prevalent strategy (Berry et al., 2006). Even some surveys focused on Chinese overseas students, but conducted in other western countries like the U.S., Canada and Australia, also confirm that integration is the most effective strategy of successful adaptation (Berry, 1990). Previous findings demonstrate the marked superiority of the mode. In the studies undertaken by Berry and his team (Berry et al, 2006), it is found to be the most preferred mode of acculturation. This picture has also been found in other societies (Neto et al., 2005).

However, things are quite different in Germany. In comparison with those immigrant countries such as the U.S., Canada and Australia, because of its very restrictive immigration policy, Germany has until quite recently been highly isolated from the consequences of massive migration except for immigrants from Turkey and Vietnam in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Neto et al., 2005). The ethnocentrism of the nation and policies toward immigration function as a major factor impacting immigrants from all over the world.

When it comes to the results in this survey, there may be several reasons why assimilation is not the prevalent strategy. First of all, although the participants possess the necessary language skills, most of their spare time is spent in a small Chinese group, so they maintain a lot of Chinese traditions and customs. Most of the students want to return to China after they finish their study. So they don't regard behaving or thinking in the same way as the host society as being indispensable for their future career. To understand the host society to a certain extent is satisfactory for them and for their future life. In addition, there are sharp differences of the cultural and thinking modes between the two countries, which set great obstacles for them to fully understand each other. These facts provide a consistent explanation for why assimilation is not taken as the most preferred acculturation strategy among the Chinese students.

Those participants who had elevated assimilation scores also tended to have high integration scores. Thus, the assimilation and integration scales are not independent. This is an interesting empirical finding. According to Berry et al. (1987), empirical relationships between acculturation scales vary as a function of the immigrant or ethnic group's social standing within the wider population and their opportunity to enter into the majority culture. Perhaps, given their ethnic distinctiveness and relatively low social standing in Germany, integration for Chinese students may be characterized by a desire to fit in rather than an attempt to socialize and communicate with the German people.

### **Separation and Social Background**

Many Chinese students in Germany tend to choose separation as the preferred strategy, which may reveal some distinct features underlying their acculturation modes. When two groups are integrated, the economically inferior side is bound to obtain lower social standing and suffer discrimination (Berry et al., 2006). Chinese people lack a historic background in Germany, let alone a powerful union or organization to reinforce their social status as a whole

group. As a new ethnic group in German society, the Chinese group is mainly composed of students and overseas workers, who are in the lower class and poorly privileged. Being separated and rejected by the host society, the Chinese students tend to prefer separation rather than assimilation as their acculturation strategy. It is thus difficult for the Chinese to completely adopt German attitudes and behavioral patterns. Their attempt to return to the Chinese culture and lifestyle provides them with comfort, security and self-respect. Although they are willing to participate in the host society, they do not receive equal reactions from the host society, and experience being rejected by forms of prejudice and discrimination. As Vedder and Virta (2005) point out, optimal levels of adaptation for a particular group of immigrants may be restricted by actions or reactions of another group and by the immigrants' own perceptions and appreciations of the acculturation settings where they live.

As a common phenomenon, an extensive literature on interactions between international and domestic students converges to indicate that the amount of cross-national interaction is typically low, and international students expect and desire greater contact. Cross-cultural studies demonstrate that most international students have primary bonds with co-nationals, and greater perceived cultural distance is associated with more co-national interaction and less satisfaction with host national relations (Leong & Ward, 2000). Chinese overseas students with only educational background lack economic or political power with which to oppose the host society and lead an independent existence, and are thus rendered to choose separation as their way to acculturate in the German society. They may thus psychologically attempt to return to the traditional culture and lifestyle that they have previously enjoyed in China, and feel it easy to live in a small Chinese group, which seems to be a comfortable and acceptable lifestyle for them.

### **Distance and Acculturation**

The acculturation of Chinese students in Germany reflects what is happening in groups of immigrants where a long cultural distance exists between the ethnic group and the host group. Part of the differences between the groups may be attributed to the features of the two distinct societies. Closeness between the original and new culture facilitates the integration in the new culture. Closeness between two cultures produces less "behavioral shifts" and reduces the "acculturative stress" (Berry et al., 1987), with consequently fewer levels of psychological problems. Ample evidence has shown that differences exist in various national groups and settlement societies. For instance, according to a survey in Norway, Pakistanis appear to desire separation most while Vietnamese desire assimilation most (Sam & Berry, 1995). Even a survey on Portuguese immigrants in Germany finds that integration is definitely the predominant acculturation strategy (Neto et al., 2005).

Chinese culture is impacted greatly by Confucianism, which emphasizes that the ultimate goal of human behavior is to achieve "harmony", which leads Chinese people to pursue a conflict-free and group-oriented system of human relationships. However, Western culture is one that highly values individualism. People are expected to take the initiative in advancing their personal interests and well-being and to be direct and assertive in interacting with others (Samovar, 2009). Therefore, communication problems arise when cultures that value assertiveness come in contact with cultures that value accord and harmony. From another

perspective, neither assimilation nor integration is inevitable or effortless between two introvert and passive nationalities. Since the traditions in China do not praise openness and self-expressing, and German nationality is ethnocentric in nature, naturally neither Chinese nor Germans are enthusiastic in communication so that they can hardly achieve close relationship.

Considering from the aspect of individualism–collectivism, there exists a relatively large cultural difference between the two nations of China and Germany (Diener & Diener 1995). Triandis (1995) speculated about the consequences of individualism and collectivism for interpersonal relations. He indicated that collectivists have fewer in-groups but are closely linked to them. They tend to have few but intimate relationships, whereas individualists have many relationships of low intimacy. Individualists may have more in-groups than collectivists; however, they enter and exit them with greater frequency. To be more specific, China is a highly collectivist nation, whereas Germany is a highly individualistic nation. Generally speaking, the more difference between two cultures, the more acculturation problems would arise (Zheng et al, 2004). Chinese overseas students may experience a number of acculturation conflicts as they become more exposed to the traditions, values, and norms of German society. These individuals are faced with the challenge of resolving primary issues related to the existence of two differing worldviews—those of their own culture and those of the dominant culture—which may impact individuals to varying degrees. It is assumed that the bigger the social distance, the bigger the culture shock, and also the longer and the harder the acculturation process. Apparently, the successful acculturation of Chinese students in Germany is not an easy one.

### **Gender and Acculturation Strategies**

Demographic factors such as age, gender and duration have all been identified as possible sources of variation (Berry et al., 2006). Gender is found to be an influential factor particularly in this study. Twenty-seven females out of thirty-one have chosen integration, reaching 87.1% of the total females. Conversely, twenty-seven males have shown their preferences for separation, accounting for 79.4% of all the male participants. It is obvious that females prefer integration while males adopt separation much more than integration. The reasons mainly derive from the fact that girls are naturally more easily accepted by the German society than boys.

Choosing separation or integration may result in optimal adaptation outcomes. In the study of Nesdale, Rooney & Smith (1997) that explores the relationship between ethnic identity and psychological distress in Vietnamese adult immigrants in Australia, it is revealed that women had a stronger drive towards integration than men. Women want to belong to and participate in the majority culture. Nesdale et al.(1997) suggested that both Vietnamese women and men had to cope with rejection and discrimination. Men, however, felt this negative attitude of the majority more strongly than women. The studies by ICSEY also find the effect of gender, with boys having higher scores for psychological adaptation and lower for sociocultural adaptation than girls (Berry et al., 2006).

Cultural characteristics may help determine whether the population acts defensively or progressively to its minority status and may independently affect the material success, or failure, of that population in its new environment. In masculine cultures (Hall,1990) like German society, the roles of men and women are usually distinct. Men are generally more

assertive, tough, and focus on material success, while women are more modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life.

Asian females seem to be integrated more easily than males partly due to the material success. Eastern females seem to be gentle, obedient and charming in the eyes of the Western males. Therefore, the theory on a micro and macro scale is generally supported: Asian marriage patterns rapidly “modernize”, with high levels of intermarriage between female immigrants and white males (Liang and Ito, 1999). This marriage migration, typically from Asian countries, is now the dominant component of marriage-related migration and continues to increase.

The fact cannot be neglected that some Chinese young girls intend to migrate to the West, for which marriage is a helpful bridge. They may take the step of becoming citizens of the new country, and may even adopt attitudes similar to those of the people of the target culture, and learn to speak the target language without an accent. It is therefore not strange that females present preference in choosing the integration strategy.

### Conclusion

This current research attempts to find out preferences in acculturation strategies among Chinese students in Germany and has two major findings. Responses to the questionnaire reveal that both integration and separation are the preferred acculturation strategies. Males prefer separation while females predominantly choose integration. The two major findings are the distinguishing traits, which differ from previous studies in this field. The findings suggest that the acculturation patterns of Chinese students in Germany are characterized by specific cross-cultural traits due to the social and cultural distinctions of the two nations.

One major limitation of the present study is the participants. Most participants are from East Germany, and almost all of them are studying in small or medium-sized cities rather than international metropolises. They are leading a simple university life and share similar Chinese friends, which results in lack of diversity of the sample. Chinese students in big cities in West Germany like Munich and Frankfurt may live more interactively and present diversified acculturation features. Consequently, the sample may not be representative enough of the overall Chinese students studying in Germany. Secondly, this study lacks longitudinal data. Acculturation is a process that takes place over time and is influenced by age, experience and environment. Studying the same students for a longer period of time would contribute greatly to our understanding of the development and changes in the process of acculturation. Since the participants involve Chinese students from some different German cities with different ages and lengths of residence, it is difficult to keep track of them for a longer time. Many students may move to other cities or graduate before long, or they may not be willing to be part of a longer term research. Time as well as location constraints prevented the authors from collecting longitudinal data.

It is recommended that future research with a larger sample engage in more rigorous validation procedures to substantiate the validity of the scales and to refine the scales. New research would be needed to pay more attention to the assessment of language proficiency with a more effective and efficient instrument. Last but not least, longitudinal and in-depth studies are definitely needed in future research.

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## Appendix

### Questionnaire on Acculturation Strategies of Chinese Students in Germany

Dear Sir or Madam,

This questionnaire aims at investigating the acculturation strategies of Chinese students in Germany. Your honest answers are very much appreciated. Your information will be kept confidential and used for the purpose of this research only.

Best wishes,

#### Personal Information

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Age of arrival in Germany: \_\_\_\_\_

Resident City in Germany: \_\_\_\_\_ Duration of sojourn in Germany: \_\_\_\_\_

DSH score: \_\_\_\_\_ (the highest one if you've taken several tests)

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Circle the one based on your own experience.

Strongly agree – 1    Agree somewhat - 2    Not sure/ Neutral agree – 3

Disagree somewhat – 4    Strongly disagree – 5

#### Section A

1. I behave like a German in many ways.
2. Most of the music I listen to is Chinese music.
3. I would be just as willing to marry a German as a Chinese.
4. Generally, I find it difficult to socialize with anybody, Chinese or German.
5. When I am in my apartment/house, I typically speak German.
6. My closest friends are Chinese.
7. I think as well in German as I do in Chinese.
8. I sometimes feel that neither Germans nor Chinese like me.
9. If I were asked to write poetry, I would prefer to write it in German.
10. I prefer going to social gatherings where most of the people are Chinese.
11. I have both German and Chinese close friends.
12. I prefer to have both Chinese and non- Chinese friends.
13. I get along better with Germans than Chinese.
14. I feel that Germans don't treat me the same as they socialize with other Germans.
15. I feel that both Chinese and Germans value me.
16. I sometimes find it hard to communicate with people.
17. I feel that Germans understand me better than Chinese do.
18. I would prefer to go out on a date with a Chinese than with a German.
19. I feel very comfortable around both Germans and Chinese.
20. I sometimes find it hard to make friends.
21. Most of my friends are Chinese.

22. I feel more relaxed when I am with a German than when I am with a Chinese.
23. Sometimes I feel that Chinese and Germans do not accept me.
24. I feel more comfortable socializing with Germans than I do with Chinese.
25. Chinese should not date non-Chinese.
26. Sometimes I find it hard to trust both Germans and Chinese.
27. I like taking part in both Chinese and non-Chinese social activities.
28. I find that both Chinese and Germans often have difficulty understanding me.

### **Section B**

29. I study German well in order to be integrated into German society.
30. I study German well in order to make more foreign friends.
31. I study German well in order to understand German culture.
32. I study German well only for the sake of study.
33. Studying German well is very important to both my studying and living.
34. It is very important for me to study both Chinese and German well.
35. Generally speaking, I have high German language proficiency.
36. I can talk with German people in fluent German.
37. I can participate in class discussion in fluent German.
38. I feel it is very difficult to understand what my German teachers and friends say.
39. It is extremely difficult for me to write my thesis in German.
40. I can speak German without worrying about mistakes.
41. I can write German without worrying about mistakes.
42. I find memorizing German vocabulary easy.
43. I find understanding German grammar easy.
44. I fear to deal with official affairs on my own because of the language barrier.

### **Section C**

45. I prefer to be dressed in Western styles.
46. I prefer Western music to Chinese music.
47. I love Chinese culture, history and traditions.
48. Being part of the Chinese culture is embarrassing to me.
49. I sometimes find it hard to make friends.
50. Physically, I feel tired.
51. In my daily life, I feel tense and anxious.
52. I feel lonely even if I am with people.
53. I often feel helpless in dealing with problems of my life.
54. I am not used to the pace of life here.
55. I am threatened by belonging to different ethnic groups.
56. I feel unaccepted by the German people I know.
57. I feel uneasy when I am with people.
58. I sometimes find it hard to socialize with people.

Thank you for your time and attention