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FUTURE PROSPECTS OF CHINESE AND HUNGARIAN CHILDREN LIVING IN HUNGARY – VALUES, SOCIAL CONTEXT AND COPING

THESES OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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INTRODUCTION

The doctoral research examines the future prospects of Chinese immigrant children living in Hungary and their past experience as an antecedent to it. The research pays special attention to the issue of the changes, transitions (positive and negative) and adaptation to these changes in the process of (life-long) development. It examines how the individual pathways are developing along different life events and contextual factors, and what future projections are being constructed for one's own future.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical background of the dissertation consist of three major chapters. The first chapter focuses on the processes of future projection and autobiographical memory, and their relation to each other. It explores how the individual constructs oneself, one's life history in the past (Conway, 1996), and with what kind of cognitive processes one creates continuity between past and future (Addis et al., 2008). Also, it discusses how continuous, interpreted life history narrative (Gergen and Gergen, 1998; McAdams, 2001) is built, connecting past selves to possible future (narrative) selves (Erikson, 2007, Whitty, 2000). The chapter discusses the characteristics of prospective thinking (Bernsten and Jacobsen, 2008, Bernsten and Bohn) and highlights cultural aspects of future thinking (Wang et al., 2011, Wang et al., 2000).

The second chapter focuses on the processes of development, the issue of normative and nonnormative change (Baltes et al., 2006) from the perspective of the individual's development. It elaborates on specific age tasks in the developmental process, including the crises associated with change (Erikson, 1963). Also, it discusses the prototypical, normative life-career and the concept of the cultural life scenario; special place and relevance of negative life events in the path of the whole life-history scenario is examined (Bernsten and Rubin, 2002, 2004). This chapter also deals with the mechanisms of coping with change, including their cultural specificities (Cheng et al., 2010, Jose and Huntsinger, 2005).

The third subchapter of the theoretical review discusses the theories and concepts of migration and acculturation processes (Berry, 1997, Bochner, 1972, 1986), focusing on the phenomena of acculturative stress (Ward et al., 2001), acculturation development (Oppedal and Toppelberg, 2016). It also presents the socialization and cultural features of Chinese immigrant children and young people in Hungary (Örkény and Székelyi, 2010b, Nyíri, 2006, Barna et al., 2012).

THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation is an exploratory research, with the aim of studying the lives and important life events of Chinese immigrant children from three theoretical perspectives – acculturation psychology, autobiographical memory (self-narratives) and developmental psychology – in order to link these fields, and enrichen the knowledge about immigrant children and youth. Research explores both short life-history events and concrete future plans, as well as a holistic perspective on the entire life history.

METHODOLOGY

The four studies which are presented rely on data from a total of four data collection. In the first phase of the research, qualitative interviews and questionnaires (quantitative and qualitative) were conducted with Chinese immigrant children, and Chinese parent sample (data collection 1-3). In the second phase of the research, a qualitative interview survey (data collection 4) was carried out. Convenience sampling and if it was possible, snowball sampling were applied. Recruitment strategies included visiting schools visited by Chinese immigrants, advertising in a Chinese-Hungarian Facebook group, accessing friends.

In the dissertation, the order of presentation of the examinations was based on the temporal sequence of the children's experiences (from past to future), not on the sequence of the surveys. The first two studies focus on the past of the children and the second two studies focus on the future prospects and the whole lifeline (for a summary of the various data collection procedures, and the studies in the dissertation, see Table 1).

Data collection	Method	Instrument	Sample size	Etno- cultural group	Studies in which data was analyzed
1.	Qualitative (semi- structured interview)	our own questions	7 respondents (children)	Chinese, Hungarian -Chinese	Study 1, Study 3
2.	Quantitative and qualitative (questionnaire)	our own questions, Kidcope question- naire (Spirito et al, 1988)	40 respondents (children)	Chinese, Hungarian -Chinese	Study 1, Study 3
3.	Quantitative (questionnaire)	our own questions	75 respondents (adult, parent)	Chinese	Study 3
4.	Qualitative (autobio- graphical interview)	LIM Life- Line Method (Assink and Schroots, 2010)	53 respondents (children and young adult)	Hungarian Chinese	Study 2, Study 4

 Table 1. Different data collection procedures in the doctoral research, and studies in the dissertation

Except for the first study, the dissertation primarily contains qualitative analysis procedures. The basic approach to qualitative analysis was thematic analysis, which took into account the semantic (explicit on the surface) meaning and, in some cases, the possible latent meaning. Materials were described and grouped by explicit meaning, but in the meantime analysis were carried out based on the theoretical knowledge of the researcher in order to provide meaningful interpretations (Brown and Clarke, 2006). During the analysis of the narrative materials, we analyzed the narrative (short) parts of the narratives. Holistic approach was also used where the narratives where analyzed as a whole (Lieblich et al, 1998).

STUDY 1

Difficulties encountered by Chinese immigrant children living in Hungary and coping with these difficulties

Aim

The research examines the problems and difficulties reported by Chinese immigrant children in Hungary in general, and in relation with Chinese cultural origin, Chinese family background, and migration events. Coping strategies when encountering problems are also discussed. In the course of the research, emphasis was placed on exploring experiences of discrimination and prejudices, as these can be significant sources of problems beyond general (or acculturation) difficulties (Rudmin, 2009).

Method

47 primary school students (7th, 8th grade) participated in the study. The children were reached by contacting with schools. The average age of participants in qualitative interviews (7 persons) was 14.86 (SD = 0.69). In terms of length of stay in Hungary, we can speak of a relatively homogeneous sample. The average length of stay in Hungary was 13.3 years (SD = 0.6, min. 13 years, up to 14 years) in this group. The average age of participants in the questionnaire survey (40 people) was 15.57 (SD = 1.07). Length of stay in Hungary was more heterogeneous in this group, with an average length of 5.8 years (SD = 4.9).

At the time of the survey, some participants had arrived in Hungary only within one year, others had spent many years in Hungary (min = 0, max = 14.5). Most of the participants in the interviews and in the questionnaires were students of the Hungarian-Chinese Bilingual School. In addition, students from majority schools from 8^{th} and 11^{th} district were included in the sample. The proportion of boys and girls among the total of 47 was fairly evenly distributed (55% boys, 45% girls). In terms of cultural origin (43 Chinese, 4 Chinese-Hungarians), the sample was not homogeneous, but after individual considerations, the materials of the bicultural (Chinese-Hungarian) respondents were left in the analysis because bicultural respondents are faced with intergroup discrimination (this assumption was confirmed in the results of our analysis) due to their visible minority status. Their Hungarian language skills were evaluated as relatively low according to themselves (measured on a 6-degree scale, the average Chinese language proficiency was 4.62, and the Hungarian language proficiency was 2.95).

The study is based on the analysis of data sets obtained in two data collection procedure. In the first data collection, we used a semi-structured, qualitative interview for exploratory purposes. General personal data (e.g. age, family situation, migration data, language competency), current school career, future education plans, future orientations, ethnic identity, and difficulties on these areas were asked. The data were analyzed by thematic content analysis. In the second data collection, in terms of the conceptual framework, the first data acquisition was essentially

repeated, but questions were adapted to a questionnaire form. A self-administered questionnaire was used in Chinese language with the adapted interview questions covering the general questions such as age, gender, language competency; and questions related to the research such as future education plans, future vision, etc., (in sum 55 questions). In addition, we have also applied a coping questionnaire specifically designed for children (Kidcope, Spirito et al., 1988). The questionnaire focuses on recent difficulties and strategies of coping using the concept of coping developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). The tool measures the frequency and perceived effectiveness of different coping strategies. The questionnaire contained quantitative and qualitative data, the former being processed by statistical methods, the latter by qualitative thematic analysis.

Results

In the questionnaires two main issues were identified: (1) problems in school, such as learning difficulties, exams, difficulties with homework, fear from being expelled homework, etc. (45% of the answers), and (2) family difficulties (13%). The interviews enriched the questionnaire results, in addition to the issues of school achievement, further topics of perceived school difficulties were revealed: fluctuation of classmates, thus separating from friends; institutional changes in their one's own school career accompanied by with difficulties in the new school.

In connection with family difficulties, issues with loss experience and separation were reported, such as moving, sickness, death, geographical fragmentation of family members, unemployment of the parent (as a loss in the family's life). Another family issue was the values conflict between different generations. In the interview, there was a third, topic which was more elaborated by the participants, the issue of being culturally diverse. In the eyes of the children, the most tangible point about being a Chinese person was the Chinese language, almost all of the participants highlighted its distinctiveness and special status. Consequences of "being different" were experienced in negatively tuned social interactions, mostly in cases of discrimination, while in positively tuned interactions cultural otherness has lost its relevance. Some had the idea that their friends should not necessarily be Chinese, and highlighted the values of having culturally diverse friends.

In addition to the above difficulties, it is important to note that, in the questionnaire, a significant proportion of respondents left the answer (31%) empty, had no problems in the past (9%) or had problems, but could not describe it (2) %). There was also a lack of response about the difficulties in the interviews.

In the case of discrimination, 32.5% reported some form of discrimination in the questionnaire, 62.5% of the children did not answer at all, 5% did not experience such things. In the interviews, 71% of the participants reported discrimination experiences concerning themselves or others. Those who reported discrimination have brought a rich array of negative experiences from the point of view of (1) the type of discrimination, (2) the circumstances of the incident, (3) the cause of the incident, (4) the subjects and (5) the consequences of the incident. In terms of ethnic discrimination, the Hungarian-Chinese school appeared as a bicultural, protected space. We got mixed picture as results about the coping patterns. In coping with the general difficulties, children were characterized by both problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies, effectiveness of these strategies were also perceived. However, in the case of discrimination experiences, mainly the avoidance strategy (e.g. neglect) was mentioned, which, on the one hand, fits with the Chinese coping style which is considered passive (Cheng et al., 2010), but on the other hand, it is also a typical reaction of majority children in situations of bullying (Smith et al., 2001, Bibou-Nakou and Markos, 2013).

STUDY 2

Significant negative changes in the lives of Chinese immigrant children. Examination of normative and non-normative changes and acculturative processes

Aim

The aim of the research is to investigate the most negative and negative life events, to focus on life events that appeared in the narrative life history as the most important point of life, as a crisis, as an important change. By identifying important changes and negative turning points, the study wanted to examine the possible focal points that are of major importance in the life of Chinese immigrant children. In addition, the purpose of this study was to differentiate between the normative and non-normative developmental characteristics and the cultural characteristics related to the acculturation process which is an extra focus in comparison with our first study.

Method

The study included 14 primary school pupils with Chinese background (grades 5-8.). The proportion of boys and girls was relatively evenly distributed (6 boys and 8 girls), with an average age of 12.93 (m = 12.93, min = 11; max = 15). The language of the interviews was adapted to the choice of the participants (10 participant in Hungarian 4 participants in Chinese). Participants were students of Chinese-Hungarian, English-Hungarian bilingual (8 respondents) and majority Hungarian (6 respondents) primary schools.

To identify important events in life, we used an autobiographical interview technique, the Lifeline Interview Method (Assink and Schroots, 2010), which we adapted for our own research. The method is intended to study the subjective organization of past and future events in a lifeline. A multidimensional method in the sense of asking participants for verbal and graphical data using the metaphor of the "trail", "life line", "mountains and valleys of life". metaphor.

Results

The topics of the most negative life events were grouped around four main themes: (1) death of a close family member, (2) difficulties in integrating into a new institution or community, including problems with peers, (3) separation from significant others (separation is not by death) (4) performance difficulties (in the field of learning, sports or art). Analyzing the normative and cultural nature of the most negative life events, we found that some of the most negative events can be linked to normative, developmental changes, such as integration into a new institution or community or difficulties related to performance largely correspond to "average" development tasks. These difficulties, however, are colored by special aspects related to migration or cultural issues. For example, in the case of integration difficulties, peer bullying due to cultural differences has occurred, and in the process of transnational and multiple mobility, stress of *repeated cultural reintegration* emerged.

Another array of difficulties - separation experiences, deaths - belong to the group of crises and difficulties arising from accidental crises (Hajdúska, 2015) They are unexpected, sudden emergencies, therefore; they are not considered normative, but they are not related to migration aspects either. In terms of deaths, parentification and cultural brokering, that is, cultural mediation taking on parental roles have emerged as a possible process, which is emotionally burdensome for children. In the case of separation, the separation migration-related experiences are difficult for younger and older as well.

STUDY 3

Decisions on the future of Chinese immigrant children and Chinese immigrant parents living in Hungary

Aim

The aim of the third study is to examine the future plans of the Chinese immigrant children and adults (parents) related to their children in Hungary. Also, we wanted to analyze the way how they are forming these plans. In relation with future plans primarily focus is on the issues of carrier, because in adolescences' lives school takes a central place. Expectations and fears over career and occupation are often overrepresented in future ideas at this age (Shepard and Marshall, 1999, Oyserman et al., 2004).

Method

In this study, children in the early stages of career and ethnic self-development were examined (Arbona, 1995): primary school students (7th, 8th grade) participated in the research. The methodology of the inquiry (sample and instruments) for children were the same as for the first study (see details on page 3-4).

The study included Chinese immigrant parents (75 respondent), adult data questioning was administered as part of a larger sociological research¹. The average age of the sample was 32 years (m = 32.03, min = 18; max = 61, SD = 10.53), approximately half of the participants were women (n = 39) half men (n = 36). Regarding the time of establishment in Hungary, the sample was heterogeneous, the longest time was 22 years, the shortest 1 year (mo = 6 years), the sample was not representative.

Results

The following areas have been explored in the topic of future ideas: *school and occupation* type and location; the reason for the choice and the decision process; the *challenges* of further education and career choice; and *evaluation of Chinese identity* in relation with career choice and the future (in general).

In the context of school and occupational choices, children's plans for the near future and for the school, are more confident than for their future occupational plans. Another difference is that parental expectations are more prevalent in the school choice, while individual desires of the children may be granted in later plans.

Regarding parental involvement in career choices of children, emotional support was considered important by the parents, with the presence and possible pressure of parenting and family expectations. Concerning specific activity, the preference for practical advice and information was emphasized.

In regards of future residence, answers of adults and the children showed a different pattern. 19% of parents thought that their child would remain in Hungary in the future, as for abroad, some parents planned with the home country, China (20%) or another third country (17.5%) as their child's future home. In the case of children, the vision for Hungary was 56%, the perspectives of Anglo-Saxon and foreign countries were more frequent than those of adults, 37%.

In terms of problems, the children mentioned learning difficulties, the lack of language skills (Hungarian and other foreign languages). Difficulties in social interactions, social relationships, as a result of minority social status, did not appear explicitly in connection with career choice.

¹ The survey was carried out in the framework of the Immigrant Citizen Survey program with the participation of the ICCR-Budapest Foundation in 2011.

STUDY 4

Examining the future prospects and the whole life line of Chinese and Hungarian children and young people living in Hungary

Aim

The purpose of the fourth study was to explore which topics are emerging in future-projected events, self-promotions in Chinese, and among Hungarian children and young people. In addition, as a second goal, by analyzing the entire lifeline, in this research we could explore typical lifestyles, life-paths, identifiable life-streams, and the emotional evaluation of the entire life-path. We were also trying to compare subjects with different cultural socialization backgrounds when examining the entire lifelines.

Method

In this study we included Chinese and Hungarian (majority) people from three age groups.

The Chinese primary school sample (with the exception of 1 person) was partly in line with the sample presented in Study 2. In this study, 15 students, Chinese immigrant children (grades 5-8), 6 boys and 9 girls participated (average age was 12.86 (m = 12.86, min = 11; max = 15)). There were 12 people in the secondary school group, their average age was 16.8 years (m = 16.8 (mo = 16, min = 15; max = 18), 4 boys, 8 girls. The number of young adults was 13, their average age was 21,23 years (m = 21.23, min = 17; max = 26), 3 boys, 10 girls.

The sample size of the Hungarian sample was lower compared to Chinese participant, with a total of 13 participants in the study. The average age of the Hungarian primary school age group was 13 years (n = 4; m = 13, min = 11, max = 14); the average age of middle school students was 15.25 years (n = 4, m = 15.25, min = 15, max = 16), the average age of young adults was 22.20 (n = 5, m = 22.20, min = 20, max = 24). The collection of Hungarian data was carried out with matched sampling.

The method of interviews was the previously mentioned Lifeline Interview Method (Assink and Schroots, 2010).

Results

From the analysis of the paths of Chinese and Hungarian interviewees it can be seen that in both groups, positive changes are more common in all three age groups, in accordance with the literature, positivity distortion appears in future projections (Bernsten and Bohn, 2010).

The main topics were the areas of *learning and work, family and relationship*, followed by other personal goals (such as hobby, travel), as expected in this age group. The objectives of adolescents and young people generally relate to future studies, occupation, family, leisure activities, future self, regardless of socio-cultural background (Lanz et al., 2001, Seginer, 2009).

The main difference between Chinese and Hungarian participants is that from the Chinese reports the duality of traditional family expectations, gender roles and modern, redefined gender roles can be seen clearly. Many forms of non-traditional ideas have appeared in the vision of the interviewees: they do not want a child or husband; maybe a husband but not a child; they might have a child with no husband; starting a family should be later, after the age of 30-35. Nevertheless, a more traditional (learning, work, family) trio has also been mentioned in the future visions, among those who were more traditional shifting of family plans for later ages were also present. In the case of Hungarian respondents, we did not detected either the family expectations or the duality of the traditional-modern gender roles.

The topic of mobility was also a strong issue in the interviews, and the Hungarian sample was similar in this respect to the Chinese pattern: the vision of mobility and migration abroad was

prominent in the vision of Hungarian children and young people (at all ages), just as it was in Chinese groups.

We also studied the entire lifeline for analyzing the forms of migration that appear in the lives of the subjects, and for the dynamics of lifeline. In the analysis of migration forms, the focus of the analysis was on the process of cultural change. According to our results, important psychological phenomena of the *"left behind"* or *"returned"* children are the experience of separation migration, the joy of re-encounter and the psychological vulnerability of children in critical situations such as peer bullying. In the life of these children, after a longer separation, the parent-child relationship may not be as supportive as it would be optimally.

The study of the entire lifelines from the aspect direction and dynamics (Gergen and Gergen, 1983; Lieblich et al., 1998) showed that the majority of the children' lifeline, even with negative antecedents, are progressive.

SUMMARY

The main objective of the doctoral research was to examine the future prospects of the Chinese immigrant children living in Hungary and their past experiences as an antecedent to it. In terms of the past, when asking about general issues, topics of school achievement, school, (including institutional change, the fluctuation of children hence experiences of loss, integration difficulties) emerged as the main topics for Chinese immigrant children. In relation with family, experience of loss was also an important topic (moving, sickness, death, etc.). We asked questions about discrimination experiences, and although not everyone reported such events, those who did, introduced a rich material concerning this topic. In this first study (questionnaire or interview), a significant number of children did not report problems or had no problems, but in the second study, the examination of the whole life line made it easier for participants to talk about experiences which are more hidden, and more difficult to share as well. Thus, we could gain insight into a richer collection of negative experiences. In the most negative experiences, learning difficulties, difficulties in changing institutions, loss experiences (death or other separation events) were the four main categories.

Concerning the future, as we could expect from the literature, positivity bias (Bernsten and Bohn, 2010) have been observed both in the Chinese and in the Hungarian group, the life lines showed a progressive direction in both groups. The main topics in future perspectives were learning, work, family and relationship. Comparing the future perspectives of Chinese and Hungarian participants, on the one hand, showed similar importance of some topics (e.g. work or learning), but at the same time, we could see different patterns, as well, concerning the topic of relationships and family planning. An unexpected, but interesting result of the research was the ambivalent views of Chinese young people on partnership, which draws attention to the fact that the issue of redefining gender roles can be an important topic when studying the values of mainland China residents or the values and gender roles of Chinese immigrants. This ambivalence in gender values did not appear in the case of Hungarian youth, exploration of the deeper cause of the difference can be an interesting further research direction.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS IN PRACTICE

The contribution of the research to the conceptual and methodological tools of studying Chinese immigrant children in Hungary is that in our research several different areas of the field - psychology of acculturation psychology, autobiographical memory (self-narratives) psychology, and developmental psychology have been linked to describe the developmental and acculturative development processes of children, highlighting several phenomena that are important from a theoretical and practical point of view. From a methodological perspective, our research proves that the Lifeline Interview Method (LIM, Assink and Schroots, 2010) is a useful tool for examining the lives of immigrant children.

On the basis of our results, the phenomena that can be highlighted, on the one hand is, the experience of loss, which appeared in a very tangible way in the children's interview materials. This topic can be particularly relevant in relation with the various migration separation processes. Another area of interest is the process of cultural integration, concerning which we would draw attention to two issues. One of them is the acculturative (re-entry) stress in the process of multiple (or repeated) cultural adjustment, difficulties as a result of "multiple mobility". The other is the family-based approach to the study of cultural integration processes and curves; the process of integration of children can and should be examined in a family context, with the knowledge of the movement of family members. Our work provides a rich description of these phenomena, helping the work of school psychologists and courselors.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

One of the most significant criticisms of methodological implementation concerns the characteristics of the sample. Participants were very heterogeneous in several dimensions (e.g. language usage, length of stay in Hungary, type of school visited, etc.)

In the course of the surveys, we were primarily able to use convenience sampling, and we only had access to a relatively low number of subjects, therefore, it was decided to support the exploratory nature of our qualitative research and provide a diverse sample using several different background dimensions known from the literature. The negative consequence of this decision was that, based on the results, we can only make generalizations about the experiences of the Chinese children in a very limited way, but we hope that the rich qualitative description partly offsets this deficiency.

In the dissertation, we had the intention partly to compare the experiences of Chinese children with the experiences of Hungarian children, but strictly speaking there was no complete examination of Hungarian experiences, the focus was mainly on the experiences of Chinese immigrant children. Thus, as a possible continuation of the research, it may be worthwhile to carry out more comprehensive comparisons between the two (or more) groups.

One issue which may worth further interest is the issue of peer bullying, which is a problem for both minority and majority groups (Juvonen and Graham, 2001). With a systematic approach, using the perspectives of diverse groups in bullying (victim, abuser, observer), and by examining the experiences of a number of different victim groups (e.g. different minority groups), research could provide a deeper insight into cultural differences in peer bullying.

Another issue worthy of cultural comparative research is the issue of mobility, which has been highlighted in our research on the Hungarian and Chinese groups. Increasing emigration from

Hungary among the Hungarian youth is a topic of high interest in the media, as well as in the literature. An examination focusing on this issue could provide more details about how the different cultural backgrounds, different cultural traditions of mobility might play a role in youth mobility strategies.

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