



Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures

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Abstract

The theme of this conference focusses attention on conflict and negotiation. In this paper, I take one example of these issues, and examine the cultural and psychological aspects of these phenomena that take place during the process of acculturation. During acculturation, groups of people and their individual members engage in intercultural contact, producing a potential for conflict, and the need for negotiation in order to achieve outcomes that are adaptive for both parties. Research on acculturation, including acculturation strategies, changes in behaviours, and acculturative stress are reviewed. There are large group and individual differences in how people (in both groups in contact) go about their acculturation (described in terms of the integration, assimilation, separation and marginalisation strategies), in how much stress they experience, and how well they adapt psychologically and socioculturally. Generally, those pursuing the integration strategy experience less stress, and achieve better adaptations than those pursuing marginalisation; the outcomes for those pursuing assimilation and separation experience intermediate levels of stress and adaptation. Implications for public policy and personal orientations towards acculturation are proposed. With respect to the conference theme, since integration requires substantial negotiation, but results in the least conflict, the concepts and findings reviewed here can provide some guidance for the betterment of intercultural relations.

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1. Introduction

The theme of this conference is one of major importance in two senses. “Conflict, negotiation and mediation across cultures” can be understood at both the group and individual levels. At the group level, it engages the fundamental issue of how collectivities, be they empires, nation states, communities or institutions, work out how to relate to each other, ideally through a process of negotiation in order to avoid conflict. At the individual level, the focus is on how persons who are members of different groups work out how to live together, again through negotiation so that conflict is avoided. Probably the main concern of most people attending this conference is linked to current geopolitical events. We all ask: how can peoples of different cultural backgrounds encounter each other, seek avenues of mutual understanding, negotiate and compromise on their initial positions, and achieve some degree of harmonious engagement? This broad question has been addressed for centuries by many disciplines, and from many differing theoretical perspective. In my own work around the time of the shootings at Kent State University (Berry, 1968) I have sought to develop some insights into how two opposing political cultures in Australia understood each other’s position on the US American/Australian war in Vietnam, as a basis for furthering dialogue and the avoidance of civil conflict. One party (the Australian Government) was of the view that anti-war militants were “just a few nuts”. In contrast, those opposed to the war saw themselves as motivated by a concern for human life and human rights, rooted in an ethical position of mutual respect. Our research was intended to assess the motives and attitudes of the marchers in order to convey the legitimacy of their concerns, and to undermine their derogation as “nuts”, or people without any coherent position. Similar concerns about where people are coming from, and how they seek to carry out their lives, have lead me over the years to attend to another form of encounter—that which arises for groups and individuals when they come into first hand contact with each other across cultural borders. This involves addressing some basic psychological features of group relations, and in particular the concept of acculturation.

1.1. *Group relations*

In a recent review (Berry, 2004), I proposed that there are two distinct, but inter-related domains of psychological research that make up the field of group relations. When the groups involved are essentially cultural in nature, these two domains can be termed acculturation and ethnic relations. Fig. 1 portrays these two fields, as they are rooted in contextual factors (such as the historical, political and economic baggage that they bring to their relationships), and as they lead to outcomes that can range from conflict and stress to harmony and effectiveness.

Many of the concepts identified in the domain of ethnic relations are already well known to you, and will not be the focus of this paper, although some of the concepts will be referred to. The main interest here is in the domain of acculturation, to which I now turn.

1.2. *Acculturation*

Acculturation is the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members. At the group level, it involves changes in social structures and institutions and in cultural

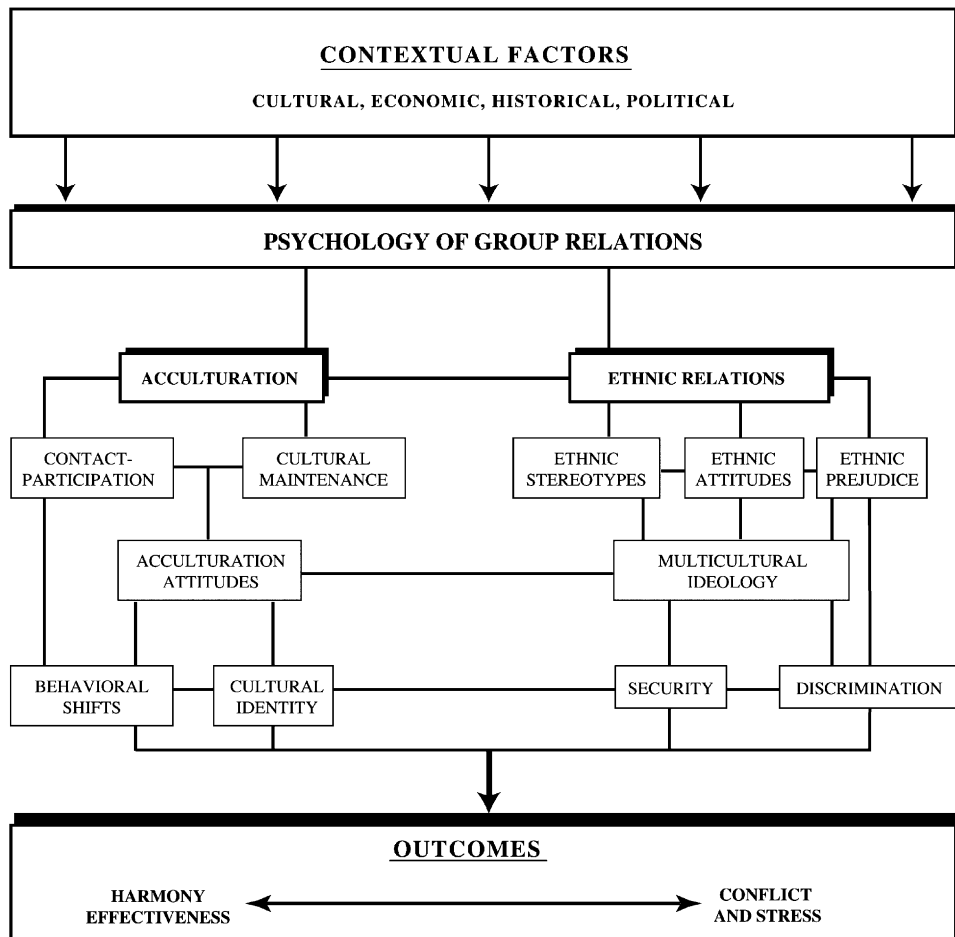


Fig. 1. Psychology of group relations: contexts, processes and outcomes.

practices. At the individual level, it involves changes in a person’s behavioral repertoire. These cultural and psychological changes come about through a long-term process, sometimes taking years, sometimes generations, and sometimes centuries. Acculturation is a process of cultural and psychological changes that involve various forms of mutual accommodation, leading to some longer-term psychological and sociocultural adaptations between both groups. Contact and change occur for a number of reasons, including colonization, military invasion, migration, and sojourning (such as tourism, international study, and overseas posting); it continues long after initial contact in culturally plural societies, where ethnocultural communities maintain features of their heritage cultures. While acculturation is a process that continues for as long as there are culturally different groups in contact, some longer-term adaptation to living in culture-contact settings takes various forms usually resulting in some form of longer-term accommodation among the

groups in contact. This often entails, for example, learning each other's languages, sharing each other's food preferences, and adopting forms of dress and social interactions that are characteristic of each group. Sometimes these mutual adaptations take place rather easily (through processes of culture shedding and culture learning; see [Berry, 1992](#)), but they can also create culture conflict and acculturative stress during intercultural interactions. One key feature of all acculturation phenomena is the variability with which they take place: there are large group and individual differences in the ways in which people seek to go about their acculturation (termed acculturation strategies), and in the degree to which they achieve satisfactory adaptations. In addition to cultural group and individual variation, there are variations within families: among family members, acculturation often proceeds at different rates, and with different goals, sometimes leading to an increase in conflict and stress and to more difficult adaptations.

From the point of view of this conference, we need to address the basic question: does acculturation always involve conflict and result in negative outcomes for both groups involved? The goal of this paper is to outline the meaning and uses of the concept of acculturation as it is currently used in the fields of cross-cultural and intercultural psychology. Following this discussion of acculturation as a general concept, many of the concepts that have been identified in this introduction will be elaborated in later sections. In my view, acculturation and adaptation are now reasonably well understood; I believe that we are in a position to pursue the development of policies and programs to promote successful outcomes for all parties involved in the contact situation.

2. The concept of acculturation

Acculturation has been taking place for millennia, but contemporary interest in research on acculturation grew out of a concern for the effects of European domination of indigenous peoples. Later, it focused on how immigrants changed following their entry and settlement into receiving societies. More recently, much of the work has been involved with how ethnocultural groups relate to each other and change as a result of their attempts to live together in culturally plural societies. Nowadays, all three foci are important, as globalization results in ever-larger trading and political relations: Indigenous national populations experience neo-colonization and demonstrate resistance, while new waves of immigrants, sojourners, and refugees flow from these economic and political changes, and large ethnocultural populations become established in most countries. Of increasing concern is the acculturation that is taking place among the long-settled populations, as they strive to maintain their societies in the face of increasing cultural diversity in their midst. These two foci of interest (on the established as well as on the newer populations) represent the mutual or reciprocal nature of acculturation: everyone is involved, and everyone is doing it.

Although much of this initial concern and research was carried out in traditional immigrant receiving countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United States; see [Chun, Balls-Organista, & Marin, 2003](#)), these issues have become more and more important in the rest of the world, where massive population contacts and transfers are taking place (see [Sam & Berry, 2006](#) for an international perspective). Particularly in Asia, where half of the world's population lives in culturally diverse societies, people experience daily intercultural encounters and have to meet the demands for cultural and psychological change. Cross-cultural psychologists take seriously the view that findings from research in one culture

area of the world (or even in a few societies) cannot be generalized to others. Thus, as our knowledge of international acculturation experiences, ideologies, and sensitivities increases, we will need to alter the conceptions and extend the empirical findings that are portrayed in this paper. Nevertheless, some evidence exists to show that the very concept of acculturation, the various strategies adopted by immigrants and members of the national society, and the nature of the problems that may occur are rather similar to those identified in the research in other countries. It is, of course, up to all societies, and their diverse residents to assess the relevance and validity of this existing work for their societies.

Although there are now many competing views about the meaning of acculturation, early views about its nature are a useful foundation for contemporary discussion. Two formulations in particular have been widely quoted. The first is

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 culture patterns of either or both groups...under this definition, acculturation is to be distinguished from culture change, of which it is but one aspect, and assimilation, which is at times a phase of acculturation (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936, pp. 149–150).

In another formulation, acculturation was defined as

Culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems. Acculturative change may be the consequence of direct cultural transmission; it may be derived from non-cultural causes, such as ecological or demographic modification induced by an impinging culture; it may be delayed, as with internal adjustments following upon the acceptance of alien traits or patterns; or it may be a reactive adaptation of traditional modes of life (Social Science Research Council, 1954, p. 974).

In the first formulation, acculturation is seen as one aspect of the broader concept of culture change (that which results from intercultural contact) and is considered to generate change in “either or both groups”; that is, acculturation takes place in the settled or dominant group as well as in the non-dominant group. Acculturation is distinguished from assimilation (which may be “at times a phase”); that is, there are a number of alternative courses and goals to the process of acculturation. These are important distinctions for psychological work, and will be pursued later in this paper. In the second definition, a few extra features are added, including change that is indirect (not cultural but “ecological”) and delayed (internal adjustments, presumably of both a cultural and psychological character take time). Importantly, acculturation can be “reactive”; that is, by rejecting the cultural influence from the dominant group and changing back towards a more “traditional” way of life, rather than inevitably towards greater similarity with the dominant culture.

Graves (1967) introduced the concept of psychological acculturation, which refers to changes in an individual who is a participant in a culture contact situation, being influenced both directly by the external culture, and by the changing culture of which the individual is a member. There are two reasons for keeping the cultural and psychological levels distinct. The first is that cross-cultural psychology views individual human behavior as interacting with the cultural context within which it occurs. Given these two distinct levels of phenomena, separate conceptions and measurements are required. The second

reason is that not every individual enters into, and participates in, or changes in the same way; there are vast individual differences in psychological acculturation, even among individuals who live in the same acculturative arena. That is, while general acculturation is taking place at the group level, individuals have variable degrees of participation in them, and variable goals to achieve from the contact situation.

A framework that outlines and links cultural and psychological acculturation and identifies the two (or more) groups in contact is presented in Fig. 2. This framework serves as a map of those phenomena that need to be conceptualized and measured during acculturation research. At the cultural level (on the left of the figure) we need to understand key features of the two original cultural groups (A and B) prior to their major contact, the nature of their contact relationships, and the resulting dynamic cultural changes in both groups and in the emergent ethnocultural groups during the process of acculturation. The gathering of this information requires extensive ethnographic, community-level work. These changes can be minor or substantial, and range from being easily accomplished through to being a source of major cultural disruption. At the individual level (on the right) we need to consider the psychological changes that individuals in all groups undergo, and their eventual adaptation to their new situations. Identifying these changes requires sampling a population and studying individuals who are variably involved in the process of acculturation. These changes can be a set of rather easily accomplished behavioral shifts (e.g., in ways of speaking, dressing, eating, and in one's cultural identity) or they can be more problematic, producing acculturative stress as manifested by uncertainty, anxiety, and depression (Berry, 1976). Adaptations can be primarily psychological (e.g., sense of well-being or self-esteem) or sociocultural, linking the individual to others in the new society as manifested, for example, in competence in the activities of daily intercultural living.

2.1. *Acculturation contexts*

As for all cross-cultural psychology (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 2002), it is imperative that work on acculturation be based in examining its cultural contexts. We need to understand, in ethnographic terms, both cultures that are in contact if we are to understand the individuals who are in contact.

Fig. 2 shows that there are five aspects of cultural contexts: the two original cultures (A and B), the two changing ethnocultural groups (A' and B'), and the nature of their contact and interactions. These five sets of phenomena define the nature of acculturation process at the cultural level, and establish the starting point for the process of acculturation at the psychological level.

Beginning with these culture-level phenomena, and taking the immigration process as an example, we may refer to the society of origin (A) and society of settlement (B), and their respective changing cultural features following contact (A¹ and B¹). A complete understanding of acculturation would need to start with a fairly comprehensive examination of the societal contexts: In the society of origin, the cultural characteristics that accompany individuals into the acculturation process need description, in part to understand (literally) where the person is coming from and in part to establish cultural features for comparison with the society of settlement. The combination of political, economic, and demographic conditions being faced by individuals in their society of origin also needs to be studied as a basis for understanding the degree of voluntariness in the

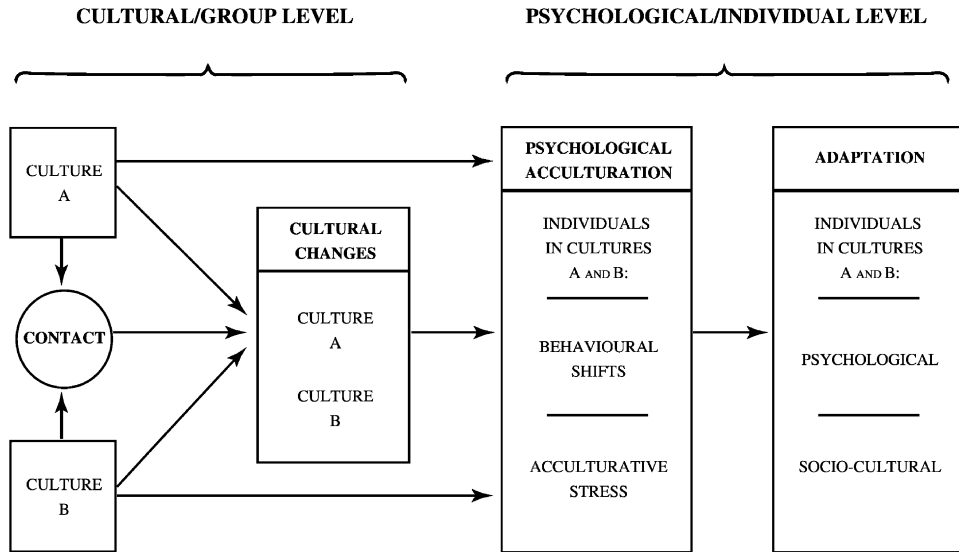


Fig. 2. A general framework for understanding acculturation.

migration motivation of acculturating individuals. Arguments by [Richmond \(1993\)](#) suggest that migrants can be arrayed on a continuum between reactive and proactive, with the former being motivated by factors that are constraining or exclusionary and generally negative in character, and the latter are motivated by factors that are facilitating or enabling and generally positive in character; these contrasting factors have also been referred to as push/pull factors in the earlier literature on migration motivation.

In the society of settlement, a number of factors have importance. First, there are the general orientations that a society and its citizens have towards immigration and pluralism. Some societies have been built by immigration over the centuries, and this process may be a continuing one, guided by a deliberate immigration policy. The important issue to understand for the process of acculturation is both the historical and attitudinal situation faced by immigrants in the society of settlement. Some societies are accepting of cultural pluralism resulting from immigration, taking steps to support the continuation of cultural diversity as a shared communal resource. This position represents a positive multicultural ideology ([Berry & Kalin, 1995](#)) and corresponds to an expectation that the integration strategy (see below) will be the appropriate way in which cultural communities should engage each other. Other societies seek to eliminate diversity through policies and programs of assimilation, and still other societies attempt to achieve the segregation or marginalization of their diverse populations. [Murphy \(1965\)](#) argued that societies that are supportive of cultural pluralism (that is, with a positive multicultural ideology) provide a more positive settlement context for two reasons: they are less likely to enforce cultural change (assimilation) or exclusion (segregation and marginalization) on immigrants, and they are more likely to provide social support both from the institutions of the larger society (e.g., culturally sensitive health care and multicultural curricula in schools), and from the continuing and evolving ethnocultural communities that usually make up pluralistic societies. However, even where pluralism is accepted, there are well-known

variations in the relative acceptance of specific cultural, “racial”, and religious groups (e.g., Berry & Kalin, 1995; Lebedeva & Tatarko, 2004). Those groups that are less well accepted often experience hostility, rejection, and discrimination, one factor that is predictive of poor long-term adaptation.

2.2. *Acculturation strategies*

Not all groups and individuals undergo acculturation in the same way; there are large variations in how people seek to engage the process. These variations have been termed acculturation strategies (Berry, 1980). These strategies consist of two (usually related) components: attitudes (an individual’s preference about how to acculturate), and behaviors (a person’s actual activities) that are exhibited in day-to-day intercultural encounters. These two components are kept distinct, both conceptually and empirically, since there is not usually a complete correspondence between them; constraints are often imposed by the dominant group so that individuals are not entirely free to act according to their preferences. Nevertheless, when measures of preferences and behaviors are both included in a composite assessment of how peoples are acculturating, there is usually a pattern that exhibits a consistent strategy (Berry et al., 1989). Which strategies are used depends on a variety of antecedent factors (both cultural and psychological); and there are variable adaptive consequences (again both cultural and psychological) of these different strategies.

The centrality of the concept of acculturation strategies can be illustrated by reference to each of the components included in Fig. 2. At the cultural level, the two groups (cultures A and B) that are in contact usually have some initial notions about what they are attempting to do (e.g., colonial policies, or motivations for migration), or what is being done to them during the contact. These notions involve preferences or goals they seek to achieve while in the acculturation arena as well as actual steps taken to achieve them. Similarly, the kinds of changes that are likely to occur in the two cultures following contact (Cultures A’ and B’) will be influenced by their respective acculturation strategies. Both groups exhibit attitudes toward these changes (they may desire them or reject them), and in many cases they are able to act accordingly.

At the individual level (psychological acculturation), both behavior changes and acculturative stress phenomena are now known to be a function, at least to some extent, of what people try to do during their acculturation; and the longer-term outcomes (both psychological and sociocultural adaptations) often correspond to the strategic goals set by the groups of which they are members (Berry, 1997).

Four acculturation strategies have been derived from two basic issues facing all acculturating peoples. These two issues are based on the distinction between orientations towards one’s own group and those towards other groups (Berry, 1980). These issues involve the distinction between (1) a relative preference for maintaining one’s heritage culture and identity, and (2) a relative preference for having contact with and participating in the larger society along with other ethnocultural groups. These issues are presented in Fig. 3.

Attitudes and behaviors regarding these two issues can range along these two dimensions, represented by bipolar arrows. For purposes of presentation, generally positive or negative orientations to these issues intersect to define four acculturation strategies. These strategies carry different names, depending on which group (the dominant

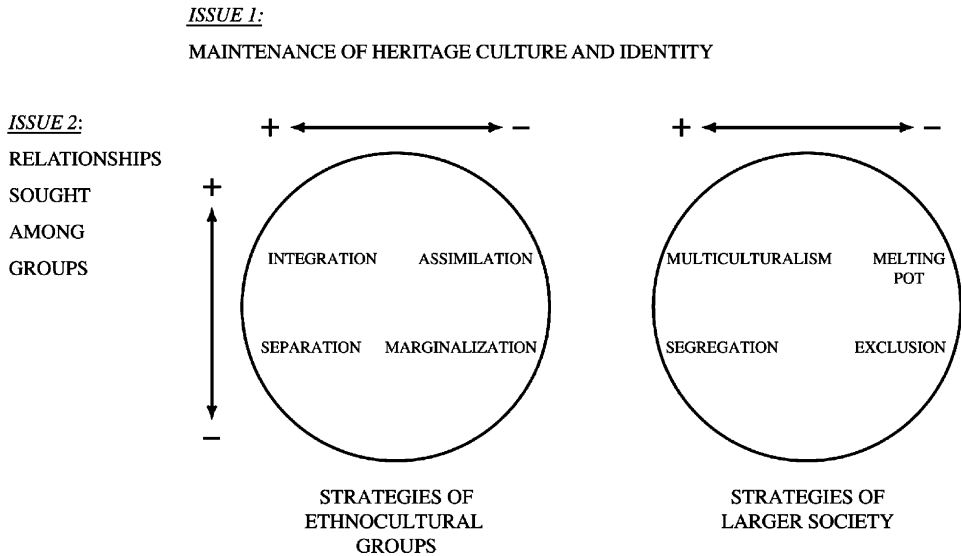


Fig. 3. Four acculturation strategies based upon two issues, in ethnocultural groups, and the larger society.

or non-dominant) is being considered. From the point of view of non-dominant groups (on the left of Fig. 3), when individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures, the assimilation strategy is defined. Here, individuals prefer to shed their heritage culture, and become absorbed into the dominant society. In contrast, when individuals place a value on holding on to their original culture, and at the same time wish to avoid interaction with others, then the separation alternative is defined. Here, individuals turn their back on involvement with other cultural groups, and turn inward toward their heritage culture. When there is an interest in both maintaining one's heritage culture while in daily interactions with other groups, integration is the option. In this case, there is some degree of cultural integrity maintained, and at the same time seeking, as a member of an ethnocultural group, to participate as an integral part of the larger social network. Finally, when there is little possibility or interest in heritage cultural maintenance (often for reasons of enforced cultural loss), and little interest in having relations with others (often for reasons of exclusion or discrimination) then marginalization is defined. It is important to note here that assimilation and integration are distinct concepts, involving differing attitudes and behaviors. In some societies, and among some researchers, this distinction is not maintained, leading to confusion in the conception and assessment of acculturation strategies (see below).

This formulation is from the perspective of non-dominant peoples, and is based on the assumption that such groups and their individual members have the freedom to choose how they want to acculturate. However, as noted earlier, this option is not always the case. When the dominant group enforces certain forms of acculturation, or constrains the choices of non-dominant groups or individuals, then other terms need to be used (see below). In particular, integration can only be "freely" chosen and successfully pursued by non-dominant groups when the dominant society is open and inclusive in its orientation towards cultural diversity. Thus a mutual accommodation is required to attain integration,

involving the acceptance by both groups of the right of all groups to live as culturally different peoples. This strategy requires non-dominant groups to adopt the basic values of the larger society, while at the same time the dominant group must be prepared to adapt national institutions (e.g., education, health, labor) to better meet the needs of all groups now living together in the plural society.

Until now, these two basic issues have been approached from the point of view of non-dominant ethnocultural groups. However, the original anthropological definition clearly established that both groups in contact would engage in the process of mutual or reciprocal acculturation. Hence, a third dimension was added: that of the powerful role played by the dominant group in influencing the way in which acculturation would take place. The addition of this third dimension (Berry, 1980) produces the right side of Fig. 3. Assimilation, when sought by the dominant acculturating group, is termed the “melting pot”. When separation is forced by the dominant group it is called “segregation”. Marginalization, when imposed by the dominant group, is called “exclusion”. Finally, integration, when diversity is an accepted feature of the society as a whole, including all the various ethnocultural groups, is called “multiculturalism”. With the use of this framework, comparisons can be made between individuals and their groups, and between non-dominant peoples and the larger society. The ideologies and policies of the dominant group constitute an important element of ethnic relations research (see Berry, Kalin & Taylor, 1977; Bourhis, Moise, Perrault, & Senecal, 1997), and the preferences of non-dominant peoples are a core feature in acculturation research (Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989). Inconsistencies and conflicts between these various acculturation preferences are sources of difficulty for acculturating individuals. Generally, when acculturation experiences cause problems for acculturating individuals, we observe the phenomenon of acculturative stress.

One issue of current interest is the appropriate conceptualization of acculturation strategies. The conceptual approach presented here is based on the presence of three underlying dimensions: cultural maintenance, contact and participation, and the power to decide on how acculturation will take place. For a long time, only one dimension was considered: it was assumed that non-dominant groups and individuals would move from some “traditional” way of living to a way resembling that of the dominant society. This assimilationist or melting pot conception of the goal of acculturation, the process that leads to it, and its outcome has now been replaced by the multidimensional view presented here. This change has occurred for a number of reasons. First, at the ethnographic level of observation (and consistent with early definitions of acculturation), assimilation is not the only form of acculturation; it has not always taken place and it is rarely the goal that is espoused by acculturating groups. While cultural change is ubiquitous, cultural groups throughout the world have not disappeared, and cultural homogeneity has not resulted from intercultural contact. Resistance to assimilation (separation), and the formation of new cultures following contact are common phenomena. Second, at the psychological level, the central portion of this single dimension is ambiguous: Does it represent preferences and behaviors that represent half-and-half of each culture, or composed of neither culture? In the terms used in this chapter, such a uni-dimensional conceptualization cannot distinguish between “integration” and “marginalization”. In my view, there is no uni-dimensional acculturation scale that has been able to deal with this problem in a satisfactory way. However, as we shall see below, this is a critical problem, because stress and adaptation outcomes are vastly different for these two ways of acculturating.

A second current issue is whether these two dimensions, and the four acculturation strategies have any empirical basis (see Rudmin & Ahmadzadeh, 2001, for a critique; and Berry & Sam, 2003, for a response to it). One of their claims is that evidence is lacking for the existence of these four ways of acculturating, and that there is no evidence that integration is usually the preferred way to acculturate. Support for the existence of these two basic dimensions has been provided by a number of recent studies (e.g., Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000). They are found to be empirically distinct dimensions, with distinct correlates in behaviors. Moreover, Berry, Phinney, Sam, and Vedder (2006) studied over 5000 immigrant youth who have settled in 13 countries and assessed a number of concepts (including attitudes toward the four ways of acculturating, ethnic and national identities, ethnic and national language knowledge and use, and ethnic and national friends). Four distinct acculturation profiles emerged from a cluster analysis of all these attitudinal and behavioral data. The largest number of youth fell into the integrated cluster (defined by a preference for integration, positive ethnic and national identities, use of both languages, and a friendship network that included youth from both cultures). The second largest cluster was an ethnic one (defined by a preference for separation and a rejection of assimilation, a high ethnic and low national identity, predominant use of the ethnic language, and friends mainly from their own ethnic group). The third largest cluster was a national one (defined by a pattern of attitudes and behaviors that are the opposite to the ethnic one). Finally, a diffuse cluster emerged that resembled marginalization. This was defined by their acceptance of assimilation, separation and marginalization and a rejection of integration (suggesting an unformed or diffuse set of acculturation attitudes), low ethnic and national identities (suggesting a feeling of non-engagement or attachment to either group), high proficiency in their ethnic language (and low proficiency and use of the national language), high contact with their own ethnic peers, but low contact with national peers. This finding of four distinct ways in which youth are acculturating provides substantial evidence for the existence of four general acculturation strategies. Since these include a complex set of attitudes and behaviors, they are considered to collectively correspond to the notion of acculturation strategies. Contrary to the criticisms noted above, there does appear to be a differential set of ways in which people seek to, and actually do, acculturate. Moreover, the integrative course appears to be the most preferred way to do it.

2.3. *Acculturative stress*

Two ways to conceptualize outcomes of acculturation have been proposed (Berry, 1992, 1997). In the first (behavioral shifts), we observe those changes in an individual's behavioral repertoire that take place rather easily and are usually non-problematic. This process encompasses three sub-processes: cultural shedding, culture learning, and cultural conflict. The first two involve the selective, accidental, or deliberate loss of behaviors and their replacement by behaviors that allow the individual a better "fit" with the society of settlement. Most often this process has been termed adjustment because virtually all the adaptive changes take place in the acculturating individual, with few changes occurring among members of the larger society (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). These adjustments are typically made with minimal difficulty, in keeping with the appraisal of the acculturation experiences as non-problematic. However, some degree of cultural conflict may occur, which in the case of assimilation, is usually resolved by the acculturating

person yielding to the behavioral norms of the dominant group. In the case of those pursuing separation, individuals may withdraw from the acculturation arena in order to avoid continuing cultural conflict. For those seeking integration, conflict can be avoided only when the two groups in contact agree that mutual accommodation is the appropriate course to follow. As noted earlier, this is possible only when there is a multicultural orientation (high multicultural ideology) in the dominant society that matches the preference for integration among the non-dominant groups. In the case of marginalization, cultural conflict is a variable feature of daily life, and is usually resolved by seeking little involvement in either culture.

When greater levels of cultural conflict are experienced, and these experiences are judged to be problematic but controllable and surmountable, then the second approach (acculturative stress) is the appropriate conceptualization (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987). In this case, individuals understand that they are facing problems resulting from intercultural contact that cannot be dealt with easily or quickly by simply adjusting or assimilating to them. Drawing on the broader stress and adaptation paradigms (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), this approach advocates the study of the process of how individuals deal with acculturative problems on first encountering them and over time. In this sense, acculturative stress is a stress reaction in response to life events that are rooted in the experience of acculturation.

Instead of using the term culture shock (see Ward et al., 2001) to encompass this second approach, I prefer to use the term acculturative stress for two reasons. First, the notion of shock carries only negative connotations. While the notion of stress commonly connotes a negative experience, in the field of health psychology stress can vary from positive (eustress) to negative (dis-stress) in valence. Because acculturation has both positive (e.g., new opportunities) and negative (e.g., discrimination) aspects, the stress conceptualization better matches the range of affect experienced during acculturation. Moreover, shock has no cultural or psychological theory or research context associated with it, whereas stress (as noted above) has a place in a well-developed theoretical matrix (i.e., stress-coping-adaptation). Second, the phenomena of interest have their life in the intersection of two cultures; they are intercultural, rather than cultural in their origin. The term “culture” implies that only one culture is involved, whereas the term “acculturation” draws our attention to the fact that two cultures are interacting, and producing the stress phenomena. For both reasons, I prefer the notion of acculturative stress to that of culture shock.

Relating these two approaches to acculturation strategies, some consistent empirical findings allow the following generalizations (Berry, 1997). For behavioral shifts, the fewest behavioral changes result from the separation strategy, whereas most result from the assimilation strategy; integration involves the selective adoption of new behaviors from the larger society, and retention of valued features of one’s heritage culture; and marginalization is often associated with major heritage culture loss and the appearance of a number of dysfunctional and deviant behaviors (such as delinquency and substance and familial abuse). For acculturative stress, there is a clear picture that the pursuit of integration is least stressful (at least where it is accommodated by the larger society), but marginalization is the most stressful; in between are the assimilation and separation strategies, sometimes one, sometimes the other being the less stressful. This pattern of findings holds for various indicators of mental health (Berry, 1997; Berry & Kim, 1988).

2.4. Adaptation

As a result of attempts to cope with these acculturation changes, some long-term adaptations may be achieved. As mentioned earlier, adaptation refers to the relatively stable changes that take place in an individual or group in response to external demands. Moreover, adaptation may or may not improve the “fit” between individuals and their environments. It is thus not a term that necessarily implies that individuals or groups change to become more like their environments (i.e., adjustment by way of assimilation), but may involve resistance and attempts to change environments or to move away from them altogether (i.e., by separation). In this usage, adaptation is an outcome that may or may not be positive in valence (i.e., meaning only well-adapted). This bi-polar sense of the concept of adaptation is used in the framework in Fig. 2, where long-term adaptation to acculturation is highly variable ranging from well to poorly adapted, varying from situations where individuals can manage their new lives very well to ones where they are unable to carry on in the new society.

Adaptation is also multifaceted. The initial distinction between psychological and sociocultural adaptation was proposed and validated by Ward (1996). Psychological adaptation largely involves one’s psychological and physical well-being, whereas sociocultural adaptation refers to how well an acculturating individual is able to manage daily life in the new cultural context. Although conceptually distinct, the two are empirically related to some extent (correlations between the two measures are in the .40–.50 range). However, they are also empirically distinct in the sense that they usually have different time courses and different experiential predictors. Psychological problems often increase soon after contact, followed by a general (but variable) decrease over time; sociocultural adaptation, however, typically has a linear improvement with time.

Analyses of the factors affecting adaptation reveal a generally consistent pattern. Good psychological adaptation is predicted by personality variables, life change events, and social support, whereas good sociocultural adaptation is predicted by cultural knowledge, degree of contact, and positive intergroup attitudes.

Research relating adaptation to acculturation strategies allows for some further generalizations (Berry, 1997; Ward, 1996). For both forms of adaptation, those who pursue and accomplish integration appear to be better adapted, and those who are marginalized are least well adapted. And again, the assimilation and separation strategies are associated with intermediate adaptation outcomes. This generalization is remarkably consistent, and parallels the generalization made above regarding acculturative stress. Evidence for the positive benefits of the integration strategy has been reviewed by Berry (1997; Berry & Sam, 1997). In a study of Irish immigrants, Curran (2003) has shown clearly that those pursuing the integration strategy have superior health than those pursuing the other ways of acculturating, especially marginalization. The most substantial evidence in support of this pattern comes from the study of immigrant youth (Berry et al., 2006) mentioned earlier. This project found evidence for the existence of the distinction between psychological adaptation (composed of few psychological problems, high self-esteem and life satisfaction) and sociocultural adaptation (good school adjustment, few behavioral problems). When these two adaptation measures were related to the four acculturation profiles, a clear and consistent pattern emerged. Those in the integrated cluster were highest on both forms of adaptation, while those in the diffuse cluster were lowest on both. Those in the ethnic cluster had moderately good psychological adaptation,

but lower sociocultural adaptation, while those in the national cluster had poorer scores on both forms of adaptation. These latest findings suggest that those who pursue integrative strategies (in terms of attitudes, identities and behaviors) will achieve better adaptations than those who acculturate in other ways, especially those who are diffuse or marginal in their way of acculturating.

2.5. Applications

There is now widespread evidence that most people who have experienced acculturation actually do survive. They are not destroyed or substantially diminished by it; rather, they find opportunities, and achieve their goals sometimes beyond their initial imaginings. The tendency to “pathologize” the acculturation process and outcomes may be partly due to the history of its study in psychiatry and in clinical psychology. Researchers often presume to know what acculturating individuals want, and impose their own ideologies or their personal views, rather than informing themselves about culturally rooted individual preferences and differences. One key concept (but certainly not the only one) to understand this variability has been emphasized in this chapter (acculturation strategies).

There are two areas of application currently receiving considerable attention in research and policy development. One is the domain of family life (including relationships among individuals within the family, and between family members and the world outside). The other is in the area of immigration and settlement policies (including issues of changes in the institutions of a society, and the promotion of cultural diversity).

With respect to family acculturation (Berry et al., 2006), evidence shows that parents and children have different views about parent–adolescent relationships during acculturation. For example, parents have higher scores on a measure of family obligations (e.g., responsibility for various chores) than do their adolescent children; in sharp contrast, immigrant youth have higher scores on a scale of adolescent rights (e.g., independence in dating) than their parents. However, the differences between parents and adolescents in their views about family obligations varied according to which acculturation profile the youth were in: those in the national profile (i.e., preferring assimilation, having a stronger national identity and having more national friends) had greater discrepancies from the views of their parents. These discrepancies in family obligations scores (but not rights scores) were associated with poorer psychological and sociocultural adaptation of the adolescents.

A second project dealing with family has been carried out in 30 countries (see Georgas, Berry, van de Vijver, Kagitcibasi, & Poortinga, 2006 for details), dealing with similarities and differences in family structure and function, and with some of their psychological correlates. This study has demonstrated both variations in family functioning that is linked to their ecological contexts (e.g., reliance on agriculture, general affluence) and variation due to their sociopolitical contexts (e.g. education, religion). In general, family arrangements are hierarchical and extended, and they have more conservative values (including interdependence) in high agrarian and low affluence societies, and with Orthodox Christian or Islamic religions. In contrast, families high in affluence and education, and with a Protestant religious tradition are more nuclear, less hierarchical, and exhibit more independence. Although not part of this study it is expected that following immigration, these variations in family life are likely to set the stage for variations in acculturation strategies, acculturative stress and psychological and

sociocultural adaptation. The basic dimensions of variations established in this project will allow for their use in future studies of immigration and acculturation when individuals migrate between the countries included in the sample of 30 societies.

With respect to public policies, the generalizations that have been made in this chapter on the basis of a wide range of empirical findings allow us to propose that public policies and programs that seek to reduce acculturative stress and to improve psychological and sociocultural adaptation should emphasize the integration approach to acculturation (see Berry, 2000, for a discussion of the social and psychological costs and benefits of multiculturalism). The argument and evidence are presented primarily for non-dominant acculturating individuals. However, they are equally relevant for national policies, institutional arrangements, and the goals of ethnocultural groups; and for individuals in the larger society. The current debate in political science (e.g., Banting & Kymlicka, 2004) attests to the importance of dealing with these issues at both the national policy and individual psychological levels. Further research is essential, for in the absence of conceptual clarity and empirical foundations, policies may create more social and psychological problems than they solve.

In some countries, the integrationist perspective has become legislated in as policies of multiculturalism, which encourage and support the maintenance of valued features of all cultures, and at the same time support full participation of all ethnocultural groups in the evolving institutions of the larger society (see Berry, 1984, and Berry & Kalin, 1999, for an analysis of the Canadian policy). What seems certain are that cultural diversity and the resultant acculturation are here to stay in all countries. Finding a way to accommodate each other poses a challenge and an opportunity to social and cross-cultural psychologists everywhere. Diversity is a fact of contemporary life; whether it is the “spice of life” or the main “irritant”, is probably the central question that confronts us all, citizens and social scientists alike.

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