

Acculturation and identity

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EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Cultures have never been static. Their fluid nature means that individuals in any culture are equally likely to be influenced by effects of other cultures and factors with which they may have direct or indirect contact. Some of the cultural characteristics and inherent traits in individuals are more prone to changes than others. The impact of one culture on another depends upon a number of factors, such as the degree of the contact, duration of this contact and purpose of such contact. If one culture invades another for political and economic reasons, the outcome is likely to be different than if the contact is through media at a distance. Linked within this process is the process of urbanization, which brings another set of changes within one culture.

Berry, in this chapter, defines acculturation as a process of cultural and psychological change in cultural groups, families and individuals following intercultural contact. Cultural identity refers to the ways in which individuals establish and maintain connections with, and a sense of belonging to, various groups.

The processes and outcomes of these processes are highly variable, with large group and individual differences. This chapter focuses on describing some of these processes, the strategies people use to deal with them, and the adaptations that result. Three questions are raised: how do individuals and groups seek to acculturate?; how well do they succeed?; and are there any relationships between how they go about acculturation and their psychological and sociocultural success? In reviewing studies addressing these questions, Berry notes that evidence indicates that the most commonly chosen strategy is integration (defined as preferring to maintain one's cultural heritage while seeking to participate in the life of the larger society), rather than assimilation, separation or marginalization. In most cases, this integration

strategy is also the most adaptive, both psychologically and socioculturally. Its implications are important for public policy.

Acculturation: cultural and individual

Acculturation is the process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between cultural groups and their individual members (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936). Such contact and change occurs during colonization, military invasion, migration and sojourning (such as tourism, international study and overseas posting); it continues after initial contact in culturally-plural societies, where ethnocultural communities maintain features of their heritage cultures. Adaptation to living in culture-contact settings takes place over time; occasionally it is stressful, but often it results in some form of mutual accommodation. Acculturation and adaptation are now reasonably well understood, permitting the development of policies and programmes to promote successful outcomes for all parties.

The initial research interest in acculturation grew out of a concern for the effects of European domination of colonial and indigenous peoples. Later, it focused on how immigrants (both voluntary and involuntary) changed following their entry and settlement into receiving societies. More recently, much of the work has been involved with how ethnocultural groups and individuals 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, new waves of immigrants, sojourners, and refugees flow from these economic and political changes, and large ethnocultural populations become established in most countries.

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 (usually dominant) culture, and by the changing culture (usually non-dominant) of which the individual is a member. There are two reasons for keeping the cultural and psychological levels distinct. The first is that, in cross-cultural psychology, we view individual human behaviour as interacting with the cultural context within which it occurs; hence separate conceptions and measurements are required at the two levels (Berry *et al.*, 2002). The second 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 (Sam & Berry, 2006).

A framework that outlines and links cultural and psychological acculturation, and identifies the two (or more) groups in contact (Berry, 2003) provided a map of those phenomena which I believe need to be conceptualized and measured during acculturation research. At the cultural level we need to understand key features of the two original cultural groups 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, 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 behavioural 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 internal or psychological (e.g. sense of well-being, or self-esteem) or sociocultural (Ward, 1996), linking the individual to others in the new society as manifested for example in competence in the activities of daily intercultural living.

Cultural identity

During acculturation, individuals have to deal with the question: 'Who am I?' Although this question has many dimensions (such as age, gender, social class, religion), we are concerned here with the cultural dimension of the question. Considerable research (e.g. Berry, 1999, Liebkind, 2006; Phinney, 1990) has revealed evidence for a complex pattern of thoughts, feelings and social relationships that make up a person's cultural identity.

As for acculturation, the issue of one's cultural identity comes to the fore during intercultural contact: individuals engage two systems of cultural norms, beliefs and practices, and attempt to sort out who they are in relation to these two ways of living. Cultural identity involves, at its core, a sense of attachment or commitment to a cultural group, and is thus a cultural as well as a psychological phenomenon. In this sense it requires the existence of a cultural group, which can be actual and viable at present, remembered from one's past, or imagined in one's future. And, as for acculturation, cultural identity involves the possibility of change, both over time, and from situation to situation. This malleability renders it difficult to pin down as a relatively stable feature of an individual's psychological make-up.

Intercultural 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, 2003). A parallel concept of identity strategies (Camilleri & Malewska-Peyre, 1997) has been proposed to specify the variations in the ways that individuals may identify themselves during intercultural contact and the ensuing process of acculturation. Which strategies are used depends on a variety of antecedent factors (both cultural and psychological); and there are variable consequences (again both cultural and psychological) of these different strategies. These strategies consist of a number (usually related) components, including attitudes and behaviours. Preferences about how to live interculturally, and the actual behaviours that are exhibited in day-to-day intercultural encounters reveal marked variations from group to group and from person to person. These variations in ways of acculturating are sometimes referred to as the 'how?' question in acculturation research (Berry *et al.*, 2006).

Acculturation strategies

The centrality of the concept of acculturation strategies can be illustrated by reference to each of the components included in the framework mentioned earlier (Berry, 2003). At the cultural level, the two groups in contact (whether dominant or non-dominant) usually have some notion 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. Similarly, the kinds of changes that are likely to occur will be influenced by their strategies. At the individual level, both the behaviour 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.

Four acculturation strategies have been derived from two basic issues facing all acculturating peoples. These issues are based on the distinction between orientations towards one's own group, and those towards other groups (Berry, 1980). This distinction is rendered as (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. It has now been well demonstrated that these two dimensions are empirically, as well as conceptually, independent from each other (Ryder, Alden & Paulhus, 2000). This two dimensional formulation is presented in Fig. 13.1.

These two issues can be responded to on attitudinal 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 ethnocultural group (the dominant or non-dominant) is being considered. From the point of view of non-dominant groups (on the left of Fig. 13.1), when individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures, the Assimilation strategy is defined. 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. When there is an interest in both maintaining one's original culture, while in daily interactions with other groups, Integration is the option. In this case, there is some degree of cultural integrity maintained, while 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 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.

This presentation was based on the assumption that non-dominant groups and their individual

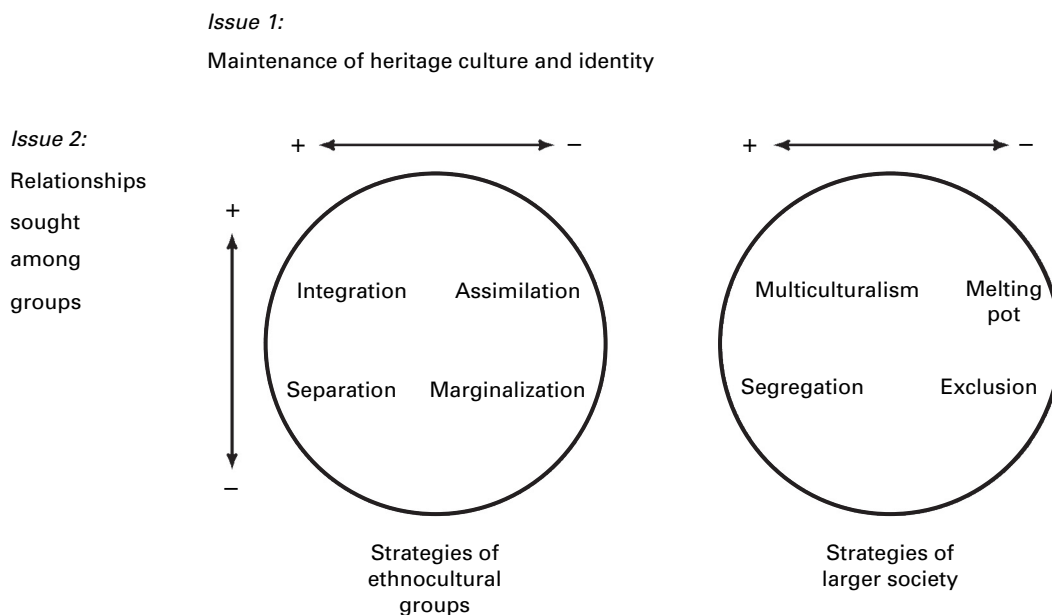


Fig. 13.1. Acculturation strategies in ethnocultural groups and in the larger society. (Also see Fig. 4.4.)

members have the freedom to choose how they want to acculturate. This, of course, 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).

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 for Integration to be attained, 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, labour) to better meet the needs of all groups now living together in the plural society.

These two basic issues were initially approached from the point of view of the non-dominant ethnocultural groups. However, the original anthropological

definition clearly established that both groups in contact would change and become acculturated. Hence, a third dimension was added: that of the powerful role played by the dominant group in influencing the way in which mutual acculturation would take place (Berry, 1974). The addition of this third dimension produces the right side of Fig. 13.1. Assimilation when sought by the dominant group is termed the 'Melting Pot'. When Separation is forced by the dominant group it is 'Segregation'. Marginalization, when imposed by the dominant group it is 'Exclusion'. Finally, Integration, when diversity is a widely accepted feature of the society as a whole, including by all the various ethnocultural groups, it 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 within which they are acculturating. The ideologies and policies of the dominant group constitute an important element of intercultural research (see Berry *et al.*, 1977; Bourhis *et al.*, 1997), while the

preferences of non-dominant peoples (their acculturation strategies) are a core feature in acculturation research, (Berry *et al.*, 1989). Inconsistencies and conflicts between these various acculturation preferences are commonly sources of difficulty for acculturating individuals. Generally, when acculturation experiences cause problems for acculturating individuals, we observe the phenomenon of acculturative stress, with variations in levels of adaptation. These phenomena are sometimes referred to as the 'how well?' question in acculturation research.

Identity strategies

A parallel approach to understanding variations in how individuals engage their intercultural worlds uses the concept of identity strategies. This approach has been developed by Camilleri and colleagues (Camilleri, 1991; Camilleri & Malewska-Peyre, 1997). These *stratégies identitaires* have clear similarities to the various acculturation strategies discussed above.

Just as the notion of acculturation strategies is based on two underlying dimensions (own cultural maintenance, and involvement with other cultures), there is now a consensus that how one thinks of oneself (i.e., one's cultural identity) is also constructed along two dimensions (Phinney, 1990). The first is identification with one's heritage or ethno-cultural group, and the second is identification with the larger or dominant society. These two aspects of cultural identity have been referred to in various ways: ethnic identity and civic identity (Kalin & Berry, 1995); ethnic identity and national identity (Berry *et al.*, 2006) and heritage identity and national identity. Moreover (as for the acculturation dimensions) these dimensions are independent of each other (in the sense that they are not negatively correlated, or that more of one does not imply less of the other).

These two identity dimensions have both theoretical and empirical similarities with the four acculturation strategies: when both identities are asserted, this resembles the Integration strategy; when one feels neither, then there is a sense of

Marginalization; and when one is strongly emphasized over the other, then the cultural identities resemble either the Assimilation or Separation strategies. Evidence for this link is found in numerous empirical studies where acculturation strategies and cultural identities have both been assessed. For example, these two strategies have been examined together by Georgas and Papastyliaou (1998) among samples of ethnic Greeks remigrating to Greece. They found that those with a 'Greek' identity were high on the Assimilation strategy, those with a 'mixed' (e.g. Greek-Albanian) were highest on Integration, and those with an 'Indigenous' (e.g. 'Albanian') identity were highest on Separation. These findings are consistent with expectations about how acculturation and identity strategies should relate to each other. Similarly, Laroche *et al.* (1996) found the expected correspondence between measures of cultural identity and acculturation strategies in studies with French-Canadians. In a large international study of immigrant youth (Berry *et al.*, 2006), this consistent pattern was also found: those who preferred Integration had strong ethnic and national identities; those who preferred either Assimilation or Separation had a strong identity with one, but weak identity with the other group; and those who preferred Marginalisation, had weak identities with both groups.

In their work on identity strategies (e.g. Camilleri & Malewska-Peyre, 1997) a distinction is drawn between a 'value identity' (what an individual would like to be ideally; cf. acculturation attitudes) and their 'real identity' (what an individual is like at the present time; cf. acculturation behaviours). These two aspects of identity can be very similar or very different (cf. the discrepancy between acculturation attitudes and behaviours). In the case of discrepancy, individuals will usually strive to reduce the difference between the two. During intercultural encounters, non-dominant individuals (e.g. Muslim migrants in France, where most of Camilleri's work has been done) may begin to perceive a greater difference between their real self (as rooted in their own culture), and a new ideal self that is communicated, perhaps imposed, by the dominant French

society. For Camilleri and Malewska-Peyre (1997), such discrepancies are particularly large among immigrant adolescents, who often share the values of their peers in the dominant society, in opposition to those of their parents' heritage culture group. This frequently leads to conflict that needs to be resolved using various strategies to preserve an individual's 'coherence of identity'.

One of these identity strategies is to maintain 'simple tolerance', avoiding identity conflict by clinging to one's heritage cultural values, and ignoring or rejecting challenges to these from the dominant culture; this identity strategy resembles the acculturation strategy of Separation. A second identity strategy is that of 'pragmatism' in the face of pressure to adapt to the dominant culture. In this case, young immigrants maintain 'traditionalist' identity and behaviour in their relationships with their parents (and their heritage cultural community), and a 'modernist' orientation with their peers; this may also be seen as a 'chameleon identity'. When such a combination is possible, it resembles one form of the Integration acculturation strategy. Another strategy that resembles Integration is that of 'conflict avoidance by complex coherence'. In this case, individuals use a 'strategy of maximization of advantages' in which the most advantageous aspects of each culture are selected and interwoven into one's identity. Of course, when one's heritage

culture no longer contributes to one's sense of self, then exclusive identification with the dominant society may take place, resembling the Assimilation acculturation strategy. Alternatively, when both the heritage and dominant cultures are not part of one's identity (which is the case frequently of young immigrants in Europe), the situation of Marginalization is present.

Acculturative stress

Three ways to conceptualize outcomes of acculturation have been proposed by Berry (1992; see Fig. 13.2). In the first conception (behavioural shifts) we observe those changes in an individual's behavioural repertoire that take place rather easily, and are usually non-problematic. This process encompasses three sub-processes: culture shedding; culture learning; and culture conflict. The first two involve the selective, accidental or deliberate loss of behaviours, and their replacement by behaviours that allow the individual a better 'fit' in with the larger society. Most often, this process has been termed 'adjustment' (Ward, 1996), since virtually all the adaptive changes take place in the non-dominant acculturating individual, with few changes occurring among members of the larger society. These adjustments are typically made with minimal

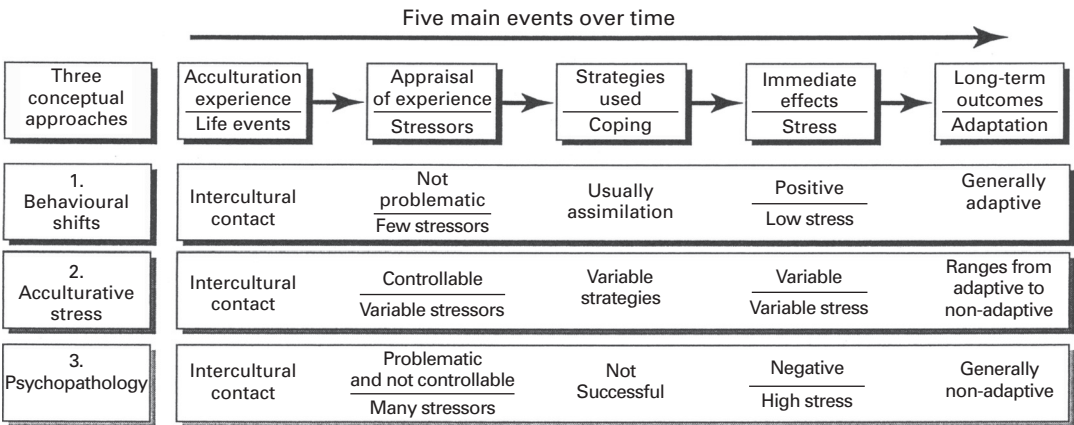


Fig. 13.2. The process of acculturation and adaptation, with three conceptual approaches.

difficulty, in keeping with the appraisal of the acculturation experiences as non-problematic. However, some degree of conflict may occur, which is usually resolved by the acculturating person yielding to the behavioural norms of the dominant group. In this latter case, Assimilation is the most likely outcome.

When greater levels of conflict are experienced, and the experiences are judged to be problematic but controllable and surmountable, then the second approach (acculturative stress) is the appropriate conceptualization (Berry, 1970; Berry, Kim, Minde & Mok, 1987). In this case, individuals experience change events in their lives that challenge their cultural understandings about how to live. These change events reside in their acculturation experiences, hence the term 'acculturative' stress. In these situations, they come to 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.

A third approach (psychopathology) has had long use in clinical psychology and psychiatry. In this view, acculturation is usually seen as problematic; individuals usually require assistance to deal with virtually insurmountable stressors in their lives. However, contemporary evidence (e.g., Beiser, 2000; Berry & Kim, 1988; Berry *et al.*, 2006) shows that most people deal with stressors and re-establish their lives rather well, with health, psychological and social outcomes that approximate those of individuals in the larger society.

Instead of using the term culture shock (see Ward, Bochner & Funham, 2001) to encompass these three approaches, we prefer to use the term acculturative stress for two reasons. Firstly, the notion of shock carries only negative connotations, while stress can vary from positive (eustress) to negative (dis-stress) in valence. Since 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, while stress (as noted above) has a place in a well-developed theoretical matrix (i.e. stress-coping-adaptation). Secondly, 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, while the term acculturative draws our attention to the fact that two cultures are interacting, and producing the problematic phenomena. Hence, for both reasons, I prefer the notion of acculturative stress to that of culture shock.

Relating these three approaches to acculturation strategies, some consistent empirical findings allow the following generalizations (Berry, 1997; Berry & Sam, 1997). For behavioural shifts, fewest behavioural changes result from the Separation strategy, while most result from the Assimilation strategy; Integration involves the selective adoption of new behaviours 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), while 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 & Kim, 1988; Schmitz, 1992), and for self-esteem (Phinney *et al.*, 1992).

Individuals engage in the appraisal of these experiences and behavioural changes. When they are appraised as challenging, some basic coping mechanisms are activated. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) have identified two major coping functions: problem-focused coping (attempting to change or solve the

problem) and emotion-focused coping (attempting to regulate the emotions associated with the problem). More recently, Endler and Parker (1990) have identified a third: avoidance-orientated coping. It is not yet clear how the first two coping strategies relate to acculturation strategies since both forms of coping are likely to be involved in Assimilation and Integration. However, the third (avoidance) closely resembles the Separation and possibly the Marginalization strategies.

Adaptation: psychological and sociocultural

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. This was referred to earlier as the 'how well?' question. 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 their 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. 13.2, where long-term adaptation to acculturation is highly variable ranging from well to poorly adapted, varying from a situation where individuals can manage their new lives very well, to one 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, while socio-cultural adaptation refers to how well an acculturating individual is able to manage daily life in the new cultural context. While conceptually

distinct, they are empirically related to some extent (correlations between the two measures are in the +0.4 to +0.5 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 while 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 all three forms of adaptation, those who pursue and accomplish Integration appear to be better adapted, while those who are Marginalized are least well adapted. And again, the Assimilation and Separation strategies are associated with intermediate adaptation outcomes. While there are occasional variations on this pattern, it is remarkably consistent, and parallels the generalization regarding acculturative stress.

The most comprehensive evidence for the relationship between how people acculturate and how well they adapt comes from the study of immigrant youth mentioned above (Berry *et al.*, 2006). Individuals who carry out their intercultural lives in an 'integrative' way of acculturating (i.e. those who preferred Integration, had positive identities with and had social contacts with peers from both groups, and were able to speak both languages) had positive psychological and sociocultural adaptation. In sharp contrast, poor adaptation was the outcome for those youth who were 'diffuse' in their way of acculturating (with a pattern made up of unclear acculturation attitudes and weak identities with both groups). In second place, with respect to how well they were adapting, were youth with an 'ethnic' orientation to acculturation (a preference for

Separation, a strong ethnic but a weak national identity, and close ties with peers from their own group but weak ties with members in the national society). And third, somewhat surprisingly, were adolescents with a 'national' orientation to acculturation (a preference for Assimilation, a strong national but a weak ethnic identity, and close ties with peers from the national society, but weak ones with peers from their own ethnic group). This pattern of relationships between how and how well people manage their acculturation has clear implications for their wellbeing, and some further implications for how professionals in clinical practice and the schools, and for policy makers in various levels of government.

Implications

For policy makers, it is now evident that policies that promote Assimilation do not lead to well-adapted individuals who are in the process of acculturation. This long-standing preference of many countries to try to absorb immigrants and members of ethno-cultural groups into some homogeneous single national culture has no research support. Even worse is any public policy that leads to their Marginalization, combining the exclusion of immigrants or refugees from participation in the larger society, and the denial of their own cultural rights. Segregation as a policy also lacks research support, although there is some evidence (Berry *et al.*, 2006) that when sought by acculturating individuals and groups (i.e. Separation), moderately good psychological adaptation results. The large body of evidence in support of Integration (and of Multiculturalism as a public policy) provides ample evidence for pursuing this way of organizing intercultural living in culturally plural societies.

At the individual level, including clinical practice in counseling, psychology, psychiatry, and social work, the same evidence supports the encouragement of individuals to maintain or regain their links with both cultures. Of course, the vast individual differences in acculturation and identity strategies

outlined in this chapter makes it essential to first discover *how* each individual is trying to live. Tools are available to make this determination (Arends-Toth & Van de Vijver, 2006), and should be employed to find out both how they are currently, and how they would prefer to, live interculturally. On this basis, and with the knowledge that an integrative way is usually preferable, efforts can be made to guide acculturating individuals towards more positive adaptations.

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