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Psychological Theories of Acculturation

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The proliferation of cultural transition and intercultural contact has highlighted the importance of psychological theories of acculturation. *Acculturation*, understood as contact between diverse cultural streams, has become prevalent worldwide due to technological, economical, and educational advancements, together with greater mobility. Acculturation psychology aims to comprehend the dynamic psychological processes and outcomes emanating from intercultural contact.

Acculturation psychology has been a growing field of research within cross-cultural psychology. Today, psychological theories of acculturation also include cognate disciplines such as cultural psychology, social psychology, sociology, and anthropology. The expansion of psychological theories of acculturation has led to advancements in the field of research as well as the bifurcation of epistemological and methodological approaches striving to apprehend both the processes and outcomes of acculturation phenomena.

The fourfold acculturation framework theory

Historically, the study of acculturation was investigated from an anthropological approach examining how indigenous people assimilate to “modern,” new cultural influences. This conception of acculturation was later transferred to groups of immigrants adopting the culture in their new surrounding society. While the term *acculturation* refers to the group level, acculturation psychology examines the individual level in which acculturative changes can vary in relation to both the specific group and the individual. Acculturation has been understood as a process happening within various domains, with changes in behavior, such as use of language, food preference, peer group interaction, and media consumption, as well as changes in attitude, such as preferences for the involved cultural elements. International immigrants bring with them cultural traditions, languages, and values differing from those found in the cultural context of reception in their new home country.

Within psychology, the focus on the individual has been related to adaptation during these cultural processes and the acknowledgment that not all individuals participate to the same extent and adapt in the same manner to the general process of acculturation. This was first conceptualized in a *unidimensional* approach understanding acculturation as an interchange between heritage and new cultural streams. Thus, an acculturating individual could be oriented toward either the heritage culture (termed *separation*)

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or the new culture (*assimilation*), assuming that cultures are mutually exclusive. Consequently, the process of adopting a new culture would result in shedding the ethnic culture. The unidimensional conception of acculturation has been widespread and is still a prevalent approach throughout acculturation studies.

Taking the simplicity of this unidimensional conception into account, Berry (1997) and colleagues developed a *bidimensional* conception stressing the independence of the individual's orientation toward heritage and new cultural streams. This new prominent conception could include individuals oriented toward both heritage and new culture (*integration* or *biculturalism*) and people with low orientation toward either culture (*marginalization*). These four ways of maintaining or discarding the cultural streams in question have been designated *acculturation strategies* that consist of attitude and behavior. These strategies constitute the principal aspect of the *fourfold* acculturation model.

Furthermore, it was recognized that the surrounding society would mutually influence and be influenced by the acculturating individual's acculturation orientation. Societal policies and attitudes toward intercultural contact would thus affect the acculturating individual's acculturation strategy and the possibility for executing this strategy. The various societal orientations toward acculturating individuals mirror the categories of attainable individual acculturation strategies and have been designated *segregation*, *melting pot*, *multiculturalism*, and *exclusion*. Even though the acculturation process affects the new cultural society, the greatest effect is from the context of reception to the acculturating individual.

The conceptual framework of the theory of acculturation psychology consists of various factors representing both the group and the individual levels of the process. This model acknowledges that the individual variables, reflecting psychological aspects, are embedded in situational variables referring to the context. Initiating the acculturation study thus requires an examination of the societal contexts involved in the process. An understanding of the involved cultural streams enables estimation of the consequential *cultural distance*, positioning the dissimilarity between the ethnic and the new cultures, such as language, diet, and religion.

The new society or context of reception holds a magnitude of influential variables relating to the acculturation process. These factors vary and are formed by the history of the society, that is, some societies are built by immigration and are guided by policy and societal attitudes toward multiculturalism or pluralism. Some suggest that multicultural ideology creates a more positive context of reception because it does not coerce any individual acculturation strategy, while allowing social support from both the ethnic and new communities.

Recognizing that acculturation is a group phenomenon, the cultural changes following intercultural contact range from superficial to deeper changes. They can relate to increased population density, new dietary habits, new diseases, employment opportunities, and friendships. These factors are important to include in an acculturation psychological model as they delineate the circumstances and the character of the intersecting cultural streams on a broader level.

Narrowing the focus to the level of the individual starts with an examination of the experience of intercultural contact and the demands related to participating, to some

degree, in various distinct cultures. Related to the acculturation experience is the meaning ascribed to it or the important individual appraisal of the experience. This appraisal can be positive, linking the experience to an increase in life possibilities, or it can be negative, perceiving it as psychological stressors.

The acculturative process comprises some aspects of cultural shedding, cultural learning, and conflict relating to changes in behavior and to the “fit” with the context of reception. If the experience of conflict becomes more severe, a stress reaction can occur that can eventually lead to cases of psychopathology. To handle a problematic acculturation experience, various passive or active coping strategies can be employed. Described in relation to the fourfold acculturation strategies, these coping strategies include the active approach of trying to alter the situation and the more passive approach of patience and self-medication. The strategies work in interaction with the surrounding society; thus, the individual can be limited in handling acculturative conflicts through restraint from the larger society.

The immediate effects of an acculturation process include some degree of both physiological and psychological stress reactions ranging from the beneficial to the detrimental. These reactions are later followed by the long-term outcomes ranging from situations where the acculturating individuals can manage their lives well, to situations where it is not possible to live in the new society. The acculturation process is highly variable in accordance with moderating factors relating to both group and individual.

Personal factors such as age, gender, education, and socioeconomic status are said to affect the acculturative adaptation. Moderating factors relating to the group include cultural distance, social support, prejudices, and the reason for intercultural contact. Time is regarded as an important factor, as the temporal progression of the acculturation experience indicates different phases of stress and adaptation. There is said to be great variability between the initial contact and eventual long-term adaptation. It has been stressed that all these factors should be included in a proper acculturation psychological study; however, no study has incorporated all the aspects of the framework, indicating room for advancement (Berry, 1997).

The fourfold acculturation theory has been applied universally to various acculturating groups and divergent cultural contexts. While the main focus within acculturation psychological research has involved international migrants relocating to Western countries, exegetical research has also studied other acculturating groups. These groups include sojourners, refugees, ethnocultural groups, and indigenous people. The groupings vary greatly in regard to relevant factors, such as mobility, length of stay, and whether the acculturation process is voluntary and planned or forced and unexpected. Many indigenous groups were colonized, encroached upon, or annexed against their will, often resulting in an agitated acculturative transition. Other sedentary groups, such as ethnocultural groups, retain their cultural sovereignty within the national majority culture. Refugees have left their home country out of fear of persecution and with an uncertain future on the horizon. In contrast, some international migrants and sojourners—including acculturating individuals who temporarily study or work abroad—have planned their acculturative journey with motivation for learning or with the hope of achieving a better life (Berry, 1997). The immediate responses to shorter and temporary acculturative processes, as experienced by sojourners and tourists,

have often been studied within psychology based on the kindred culture shock theory (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001).

The character of both the culture-specific context and the acculturative group is considered and included to varying degrees in studies based on the unidimensional and bidimensional (the fourfold model) acculturation theories. Overall, the acculturation psychological framework theory is based on a universalistic theoretical position acknowledging the culture-specific differences in search of the underlying psychological mechanisms.

Acculturation and adjustment

Psychological theories have primarily investigated acculturation experiences by considering how the individual adjusts to this experience. The changes happening in the individual can occur immediately or they can extend over longer-term periods. The short-term adaptation tends to be challenging and can have a negative character, while long-term adaptation can have a more positive outcome. In research, the overall process of adapting to new cultural influences has been associated both with positive outcomes such as creativity and intercultural competencies, and with negative outcomes such as anxiety and stress (Berry, 1997).

Designating it the *ABC of acculturation*, Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001) categorized the outcome of managing acculturative change as (1) affect, (2) behavior, and (3) cognition. The approach to acculturation of studying affect in relation to intercultural contact has been prevalent when focusing on the mechanisms involved in coping with cultural change as a process of psychological adjustment. Within this focus on affect, acculturation is understood as a partially stressful event that the individual can cope with more or less successfully. The outcome of the acculturation process is thus examined through possible changes in levels of anxiety, depression, life satisfaction, or general psychological well-being. These outcomes have also been collectively referred to as *acculturation stress* and *psychological adaptation*.

The behavioral approach to acculturation investigates the *sociocultural adaptation* relating to the acquisition of culture-specific skills and the ability to manage everyday life in the new cultural context. The concept of sociocultural adaptation includes communication styles and competencies, negotiation of effective interaction in the new cultural environment, and adaptation to new norms, values, and worldviews. Sociocultural adaptation reflects an integral part of intercultural transition because communicative barriers can create vicious circles for the acculturating individual with misunderstandings, conflicts, and resentment.

The cognitive approach to acculturation relates to social identification, focusing on how people ethnically and culturally identify themselves in ingroups and outgroups. This focus on identification is central for the acculturation process as it explicates intergroup perceptions, the origination of prejudice, the choice of affiliation with specific groups, and the relationship between group membership and self-esteem. Being intertwined and interacting, these three conceptual foci within acculturation psychology represent the central aspects of intercultural adaptation.

Acculturative challenges affecting the individual's adjustment can relate to various individual and societal factors. First, the purpose of intercultural contact moderates the character of the acculturation process. The cultures can clash if the purpose is hostile, such as in war and colonization. Second, the "fit" between the acculturating individual and the context can predict a degree of conflict. A mismatch between the individual's acculturation strategy and the acculturation attitude of the new society can create psychological challenges such as psychopathology. For example, the attainment of integration requires mutual accommodation involving an accepting and multicultural attitude in the larger society. Third, individual coping strategies to acculturative stressors can lead to either positive or negative adjustment (Berry, 1997).

There have been incongruent hypotheses relating to adjustment that includes orientation toward two or more cultures (the integration strategy). Some researchers have linked the integration acculturation strategy to positive outcomes such as dual cultural competence, creativity, flexibility, and extended social support from both cultural networks. Others have suggested that managing multiple cultures can be a psychological burden leading to stress and identity confusion. In an extensive meta-analysis, the integration strategy leading to biculturalism was strongly and positively associated with psychological and sociocultural adjustment. This association between integration strategy and adjustment was stronger than the adjustment resulting from either separation or assimilation strategy, which leads to the conclusion that integration strategy is generally the advantageous way of managing acculturation.

The relationship between biculturalism and adjustment was not concordant, as it was moderated by factors such as the acculturating group and the context of reception. The relationship between integration and adjustment was stronger in the US context as compared to other countries. Also, this relationship was strongest among Latin, Asian, and European samples, while African samples did not yield a significant relationship, and indigenous people yielded a negative relationship. These differences were ascribed to the sociohistorical factors characterizing the acculturation processes (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). Some ethnic, religious, or national origin groups may be perceived as unwanted and exposed to more discrimination. An unfavorable context of reception with discrimination and lack of access to jobs and other social resources can lead to poor long-term adaptation and impaired mental health, and can influence which acculturation strategy is most viable (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010).

Acculturation and identity

A new emerging aspect of psychological acculturation theory addresses the importance of identity formation, elaborating on the cognitive aspect of social identification through intercultural transition. This theoretical approach acknowledges that acculturation is especially closely related to the social and cultural aspects of identity, and new developments are made to include the importance of personal identity. There is a historically elusive definition of *identity* in the various theoretical positions within

modern and postmodern thinking, but it can generally be understood as the organization of self-understandings embedded in the surrounding context and consisting of and synthesizing personal, social, and cultural self-conceptions. *Personal identity* relates to domains such as career and relationships, while *social/cultural identity* relates to the specific ingroup that one identifies with.

Identity is conceived of as an underlying factor of the acculturation process and it is hypothesized that development of personal identity can help to anchor the acculturating individual through potentially challenging intercultural transition by retaining a sense of who one is. The acculturating individual can thus be shielded by personal identity against possible distress and instability often associated with the challenges of acculturation processes. With an understanding of identity as incorporating personal, social, and cultural components through a dynamic interplay between individual and context, identity appears inseparably entwined with acculturation phenomena (Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006).

During the process of acculturation, exposure to new cultural contexts is said to initiate changes and pose challenges to the cultural identity of the acculturating individual. An approach to studying identity development in relation to acculturation is through the theory of identity styles. With identity challenges during cultural transition, the individual can react through dissimilar social-cognitive identity-processing styles. With the *informational style*, the individual responds to the identity challenge with a willingness to explore alternatives and revise their cultural identity accordingly. This process includes processing and evaluating self-relevant information. Employing the *normative style*, the individual automatically relies on the context and responds in socially appropriate ways according to either their ethnic or their new cultural community. Finally, with a *diffuse-avoidant* style the individual ignores the challenge and only responds in relation to immediate situational demands with short-term modifications to identity. Thus, in relation to the process of identity formation or change there are individual differences regarding the degree of taking an active position or waiting for the guidance of the new cultural society.

A combination of elements that are both personally chosen and ascribed by the society is suggested as the most viable strategy, at least in a Western context. This represents a *process* perspective, while a *content* perspective is likewise important for one's cultural identity. The content of the process links to the specific contexts, as the content of the developing identity varies according to personal and social/cultural identity. The process of balancing the ethnic and new cultural elements in one's cultural identity can be challenging, dependent upon how this identity is perceived in both the majority and minority society. In this regard, a bicultural identity is not always the most viable as this is compromised by societal barriers, pressures, and contrasting expectations that affect the identity development. The viability of a bicultural identity varies in relation to the specific cultures in question and in relation to the cultural distance between them. People negotiating a bicultural identity comprising elements from both strongly traditional and Western societies can experience clashes and incompatibility (Schwartz et al., 2006).

Theories about identity development, especially regarding cultural identity, are essential to acculturation research and can expand the body of knowledge as identity

is especially challenged, negotiated, and sometimes strengthened in situations of intercultural contact. Because of variations in context, the process of identity formation might include inconstant processes and content.

Identity formation and acculturation have primarily been studied in the immigrant populations of Western countries. Future developments in studies relating acculturation and identity development in non-Western contexts, with various cultural groups, will lead to a broader and more detailed understanding of cultural differences and acculturative change underlying identity processes.

Critical acculturation psychology

The prevalent fourfold acculturation framework theory has been criticized for its simplicity, for being static, and for a lack of cultural advertency. These points of criticism have often been presented from a cultural psychological approach, defying the cross-cultural reduction of culture to a mere independent variable. The critique arises from relativist theoretical positions contesting the presumption of acculturation as a universal phenomenon. These critical positions stress the great variance, dynamics, and complexity that characterize acculturation marked by specific cultural and sociohistorical contexts. The two approaches generally reflect a quantitative and a qualitative methodology. Several intertwined points of criticism have received great cognizance.

Acculturation phenomena have been widely studied in a uniform manner across contexts. Employment of the fourfold framework theory has provided a universal approach to acculturation research, leading to some degree of neglect regarding the importance of culture-specific contexts that cause variation and unpredictable diversity. Acculturation does not occur in a vacuum, but is principally a cultural process formed by the ethnocultural particularity of a given context. The cultural streams involved in acculturation are situated in history, inherently comprising a power asymmetry manifested in racism, prejudice, and discrimination. Furthermore, cultural similarity and other cultural factors can influence the type and degree of acculturative challenges that the acculturating individual meets. The specific context of reception and the contextual dynamics thereof are important to incorporate in acculturation research (Schwartz et al., 2010). Thus, ethnographic information has become the epicenter of acculturation research.

The fourfold acculturation model has been criticized for being too rigid to apply to various acculturating groups. Aiming for an increase in the flexibility and diversity of acculturation research, a vital ethnographic understanding of the groups and the groups' circumstances has been advocated. Conceptions of the acculturation process could vary to include forms of acculturation other than immigration from culture A to culture B. These other forms could characterize the contemporary era of intercultural relations by including a multitude of cultural elements. In addition, it could be questioned, whether voluntary and temporary sojourners should be studied employing

the same model used with colonized and violated indigenous populations. At a minimum, some suggest that the model should be adapted to the specific circumstance of a particular acculturation process.

Acculturation can be studied as a process or in relation to a relatively stable outcome. Classical acculturation theory focuses on the outcome approach and researchers now call for theories investigating the dynamics and complexity of the temporal aspects significant for acculturation phenomena. Acculturation does not occur as a linear, teleological process, but is rather embedded with ambiguity and contradictions marking various stages of the process. For example, an immigrant can arrive in a new cultural environment with great appreciation of the new cultural stream, but after a period with possible discrimination, react by renouncing the new culture or trying to negotiate ambiguity.

Critiques of the classical fourfold acculturation theory have renounced the idea of acculturation strategies. This critique is based on the idea that the acculturating individual's orientation toward the interacting cultural streams is not fixed in time and space, and furthermore, not reduced to these four broad categories. The acculturation strategy differs in relation to domains of acculturation within the private and the public sphere (Ozer, 2013). An immigrant can feel American when he is with American friends and Indian with Indian friends. Likewise, an immigrant might choose American food when she is at a mall and Chinese food when she is at home.

These points of criticism have been addressed by advancements within and beyond what has been designated as acculturation psychology. These new developments and theories vary greatly, but together can pave the way to a new integrative acculturation psychology.

Recent developments in psychological theories of acculturation

The recent critique of traditional acculturation psychology for its lack of flexibility, its weak notion of diverse forms of cultural contact, and its reduction to simplicity of a complex and dynamic phenomenon has led to developments in this field of study. Some of these advancements aim at developing the traditional acculturation psychological framework theory by incorporating the importance of intercultural contact compelled by globalization and by focusing on the differentiation of various components of acculturative change.

In contemporary globalized and culturally diverse societies, the prevalent intercultural communication is exposing nonmigrants to acculturation through media and other indirect channels of cultural exchange. These acculturation phenomena are characterized by a higher degree of selectivity when compared to migration. People can self-select various cultural elements in hybridized acculturation trajectories. The complex connectedness across distance referred to as *globalization* has escalated the acculturation experience to a worldwide phenomenon that still varies in character, content, and degree.

The importance of globalization has been acknowledged in new psychological theories of acculturation with labels such as *remote acculturation* and *globalization-based acculturation*, distinct from *immigration-based acculturation*. Globalization-based acculturation is not caused by international relocation as the traditional conception of acculturation suggests. Rather, these acculturation experiences pertain to direct or mediated intercultural contact leading to bicultural orientations that combine local and global traditions, norms, and values through a selective incorporation of various cultural elements (Chen, Benet-Martínez, & Bond, 2008).

Likewise, *remote acculturation* refers to indirect and/or intermittent intercultural contact. Thus, nonmigrants can be exposed to various specific cultural streams through remote globalization mechanisms such as music, television, movies, food, tourism, imports, and the Internet. This type of acculturation affects the majority of the world population, and thus holds significant implications with several cultural streams coming into contact that transcends geographical and historical division. This acknowledgment of the great cultural diversity found in contemporary society demands many more details regarding the specific interacting cultures as unique and explicit for the investigated context, and is thus said to differ from the focus on global culture examined within the concept of globalization-based acculturation (Ferguson, Tran, Mendez, & van de Vijver, in press). This evolution of acculturation psychological theory aims at capturing more of the increasingly complex cultural lives resulting from globalization and the contemporary, multidirectional flows of goods, people, and ideas.

Advancements within acculturation psychology have clarified the theoretical developments and their importance. The theoretical conception and methodological operationalization of intercultural interaction have proven to be significant, and these have been inconsistent throughout the large body of acculturation research. Some researchers have examined cultural maintenance and contact or adoption, while others have investigated acculturation as cultural identification. Likewise, some theorize acculturation strategies as ideal or attitudinal, while others conceive of them as being real or self-reported behavior. These differences have a significant effect on the outcome of the studies in regard to acculturation strategies and adjustment.

Integration is a more popular acculturation strategy if cultural contact is studied rather than cultural adoption. Likewise, an integration strategy is likely to occur if studied through “ideal” rather than “real” measures, investigating attitudes instead of behavior. This can be related to various constraints in society that limit the possibilities of behavioral actions and emphasizes the importance of specifying the context of reception surrounding the acculturating individual. Thus, it is important to stress the details of the specific model of acculturation used in the studies to enhance a broader understanding of acculturation phenomena (Ward & Kus, 2012).

Other suggestions for clarifying and evolving the fourfold acculturation framework theory include and differentiate the related, but somewhat independent, components of acculturation practices, values, and identification. The independent examination of these three acculturative components broadens the widespread singular focus on cultural practices within traditional acculturation psychological theory and includes the importance of cultural identity. This model of acculturation acknowledges that practices such as behavior do not necessarily follow identification, and vice versa. Thus,

an international immigrant can still use the language of the surrounding society while strongly identifying with their ethnic culture.

Understanding that acculturation comprises distinct components such as practices, values, and identification related to ethnic and new culture espouses the complex notion of acculturation not being a single process happening at a single pace (Schwartz et al., 2010). Following recent advancements, it is important to apprehend how acculturation is inconsistently theorized and possibly use this discrepancy to nuance the understanding of individual response to the acculturation process in culture-specific contexts. New developments in psychological theories of acculturation will enhance the flexibility of the theoretical models.

Acculturation as a dialogical process

The dialogical self theory (DST) constitutes a more process-oriented psychological approach to studying acculturation, along with a focus on individual developmental trajectories. Adaptation to acculturation has been described as a continuous internal dialogue of positioning and repositioning between the heritage cultural context and the past and the new cultural context and the present, thus defining *acculturation* as an essentially dialogical process.

The multidisciplinary theory of DST captures the increasing multiplicity of self and identity in an era of globalization and acculturation. This mirrors the complexity of intercultural connectivity both between cultures in a world with increased contact and between cultures within the individual self, resulting in multiple (cultural) identities. Intercultural processes lead to various cultural I-positions interacting within a single individual. Within an arena of dialogue, the I fluctuates in imaginal space extending the self toward the environment, from the internal and external positions within the self toward positions outside the self. The *internal positions* refers to what is felt as part of oneself (e.g., the I as ambitious), while the *external positions* are understood as part of the environment such as family and friends (e.g., the imagined voice of one's mother), and the *outside positions* refer to people and objects in the surrounding environment (e.g., interlocutors). The I moves spatially within the self along with the temporal process of positioning and repositioning.

The self constitutes a society of mind in a process that implies mutual change with the external society where changes in the self lead to changes in society and vice versa. Through acculturation and other intercultural interaction, participation in a diversity of cultures expands the position repertoire within the self, making it more complex and heterogeneous. This complexity also includes oppositions and contradictions that demand greater mental leaps of the psychological distance between the various positions. This can, for example, be experienced when moving to another culture or working together with colleagues from other cultures. Complexity and contradiction can create tension between inner cultural positions, such as the collective voice of the ethnic community promoting the tradition of origin and the voice of the new cultural community urging change in the acculturating individual. This tension requires negotiation through a dialogical process.

With no strong superordinate cultural position dominating the knowledge structure, the individual might experience ambiguity and unpredictability, which along with increased complexity, eventually leads to uncertainty. This uncertainty can be positive, relating to an increase in possible actions and exploration of the unknown, or it can be negative, resulting in insecurity, anxiety, and identity confusion (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010).

The significance of the DST is its great complexity and flexibility; it is not limited to the dichotomy between local and global or between the heritage culture and the new culture. Acculturation research employing the DST holds the great advantage of including the understanding of how I-positions are constructed and constrained by issues such as power asymmetry, race, and gender. This approach stresses the great importance of analyzing how the larger majority and the collective voices of society influence the acculturating individual. The flexibility of this theoretical approach is elucidated through inclusion of the idiosyncratically important I-positions, which can relate to personality traits, sexual orientation, education, profession, class position, influence from significant others, cultural or social orientations and circumstances, and others. Complexity is captured through the understanding of cultures and identity as mixing and moving in a way that is forfeited in the essentialist and fixed conceptions often found in cross-cultural psychology that is, one Indian or one Canadian culture. The dynamics are captured through the conception of the I's continuous negotiation and contestation between various positions, including ambiguous and incompatible cultural positions. Thus, the acculturating individual is not scrutinized through a static acculturation strategy, but instead is seen as an ever-changing, complex mixture of relevant cultural positions operating in concert with a great multiplicity of other I-positions in the internal and external domain. This means that several acculturation strategies can be activated simultaneously.

Conflict and disagreement between various cultural voices is seen as a natural part of the dynamics within the self and not necessarily as detrimental to mental health. Rather, it can be a source of innovation (Bhatia, 2002). With the strong focus on context, heterogeneity, and multiplicity, the DST represents a more relativistic approach to studying acculturation within psychology, as compared to the traditional universalistic framework theory.

Future directions

Development of the classical framework theory of acculturation psychology, including criticism and contesting theories such as the dialogical self theory, forms a dialectical interaction spurring discussions, innovations, and advancements with the aim of integration in a new empirical and theoretical approach to acculturation. The future holds great possibilities for combining the various ways of studying the complex and widespread phenomena of acculturation, leading to an improved understanding through an integrative acculturation psychology.

Both universalist and relativist approaches to the psychological study of acculturation hold strengths and weaknesses. Universalist theories have been greatly

criticized for their limitations and reductionism. The more relativistic theories, such as dialogical self theory, however, also possess great limitations—that is, lack of empirical utility, particularity, and generalizability—and thus remain difficult to apply in the development of societal policies regarding acculturation. Most of the critical issues raised against traditional acculturation psychology were originally addressed in the acculturation psychological framework theory, but were not always taken into account in the empirical research studies. Based on the dialogue between theorists developing both the fourfold acculturation theory and the other theories of acculturation, a joint use of emic and etic approaches has been advocated (Berry, 2009).

Several issues separate the various theoretical approaches. The assumption of integration as positive assimilation of both ethnic and new cultures is criticized for not capturing the continuous, complex process of negotiation and cultural mixing (Bhatia, 2002). However, new developments within cross-cultural psychology have addressed both dimensions within integration acculturation, that of possible conflict or harmony and that of compartmentalization or blending, to further understand the bicultural dynamics and viability of integration (Schwartz et al., 2010). Within DST, cultures are seen as mixing and moving through constant negotiation, aiming at an essentialist cultural understanding within cross-cultural research.

Perceiving acculturation as occurring through negotiation with a myriad of cultural and subcultural voices is clearly not the same as investigating the intersection of superordinate cultural streams. However, DST also connects universal theories with cultural ones that utilize general assumptions adjusted in relation to particularity. There are dominant cultural positions within the multicultural self and a self-organizing process that allows for a sense of identity and stability. At the same time, researchers within the fourfold acculturation theory are aware of the underestimation and underrepresentation that underpin their cultural conception, as well as the reduction made when diminishing the variability into the examined cultural streams. As broad theories, there is space for intersection and the great opportunity of pragmatically combining their complementary strengths to advance our understanding of the various factors shaping the process of acculturation.

Immigration and globalization are integral factors shaping our increasingly multicultural societies and influencing psychological processes such as identity formation and psychological well-being. Thus, psychological theories of acculturation assume great importance in investigating intercultural contact. Acknowledging the importance of cultural contexts, various vehicles of acculturation, plus differentiation of the fourfold acculturation theory, provide advancements in understanding the complex underlying mechanisms of the acculturation phenomenon. Future development of the psychological study of acculturation includes both differentiation that captures more complexity and diversity and integration that acknowledges that the same phenomena are scrutinized through various approaches and methodologies within a multitude of contexts.

With a holistic and integrative approach, every single perspective is understood as partial and limited, if not related to a multitude of perspectives and contexts. Thus, analyzing and including as many perspectives and as much knowledge as possible will

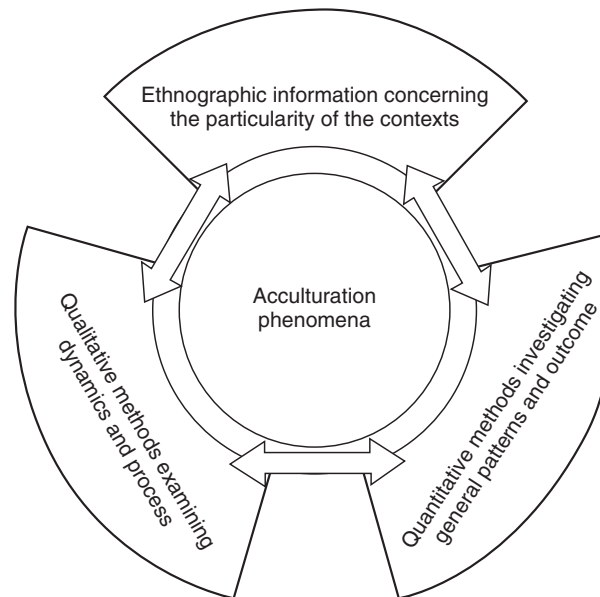


Figure 1 A model of integrative acculturation psychology.

enhance the understanding of the phenomena, balancing the particularity and complexity with the wholeness of the phenomena. In this manner, the knowledge gained from the fourfold acculturation framework theory and the dialogical self theory can complement each other, providing an understanding of both similarity and complexity that captures both the particular process of multivoiced cultural negotiation and the general outcome of more or less viable cultural orientations. This could be captured through a mixed-method approach investigating both general patterns and diversity. Figure 1 suggests a multimethodological interplay between ethnographic information, qualitative interviewing, and the quantitative assessment employed throughout the research process to capture a holistic understanding of the acculturation phenomena.

Globalization and acculturation will be a growing area of research within psychology. Psychological theories of acculturation can advance through the dual movement of differentiation—addressing the particularity in specific studies—and integration—unifying a large body of research. That is, through meta-analysis and review articles, research can lead to a more holistic theory of integrative acculturation psychology.

SEE ALSO: Acculturation Strategies; Cultural Identifications Theory; Culture Shock and Reentry Shock; Identity, Bicultural and Multicultural; Integrative Communication Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation; Interactive Theory of Acculturation

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