
Acculturation Resilience in International Students

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Goals

- Define Acculturation
- List the assumptions about acculturation
- Describe the acculturation strategies commonly used by students
- Describe the person-to-environment relationship relevant to acculturation
- Connect acculturation strategies to family dynamics
- Address counseling strategies to work with acculturating students and family members

Acculturation Defined

- **1936** - changes in original cultural patterns that result from contact with another culture
- **1954** - culture contact that results in changes in behaviors, attitudes, and personality...ends in assimilation
- **2004** - ... results 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

Assumptions about Acculturation

- It is multidimensional
- Cultures have unique ethos - life ways and thought ways
- Influenced by age, pre-migration experience, and other factors
- Affects behaviors, cognitions, emotions, beliefs, and family dynamics
- Influences expression of ethnic identity and relationship to other cultural groups

Acculturation Strategies

- ***Separation*** - low acculturation, persistence with the native culture
- ***Assimilation*** - high acculturation, gravitation to the non-native culture
- ***Marginalization*** - exclusion from all options
- ***Integration*** - biculturality

Relationship to the Environment: Separation

- No or limited chance for interaction with students from other cultural groups
- Minimal identification with the larger social group
- Manages social tension by limiting visibility and participation
- Feels devalued by the majority group, but feels singled out (target)
- If they exists and were positive, maintains connection via technology (e.g., maintenance of friendships via electronic means)
- Academically successful if adept at separating academic performance from felt emotional isolation

Relationship to the Environment: Assimilation

- Considerable interaction with students from non-native cultural group
- High identification with the non-native culture
- Minimal identification with the native culture
- Abandonment or felt pressure to abandon original cultural practices
- Manages social tension by attempts to blend with non-native culture (its practices, behaviors, attitudes, etc.)
- Feeling of value is derived from non-native cultural group acceptance and inclusion

Relationship to the Environment: Marginalization

- Nearly absent interaction with students from native and non-native cultural groups
- Nearly absent identification with native and non-native cultural practices
- Social isolation
- Psychological distress if unable to garner emotional support
- Inept at managing social tension
- Lacks experience of belonging and attachment
- May derive feelings of personal value from domains other than the social one
- Perceives social environment as foreign and dangerous

Relationship to the Environment: Integration

- Perceives that the environment is tolerant and accepting
- Reports perception of limited prejudice, discrimination, and racism
- Experiences no social tension (either group)
- Identifies and attaches to both cultural groups
- Blends in with both cultural groups (adaptability and flexibility)
- Feelings of belonging and contribution
- Feels that inclusion is purposeful (other motivated – acceptance)

Family Dynamics in the Acculturation Process: Research Similarities

- Familialism - identification and attachment, loyalty, reciprocity, leadership and guidance
- Gender Roles -
- Need for Achievement - productivity, work, leisure
- Collectivism and Individualism - decision-making, network, resources
- Internalization and Externalization - problem solving, fate, faith, religion, optimism
- Time and History - connections, traditions, legacies
- Power hierarchy and language use - cultural intermediaries
- Cohesion and Adaptability - extended family, added members

Family Dynamics in the Acculturation Process: Empirical Research (Factors)

Cohesion and Adaptability

Mobility (number of moves)

Language use (home, others)

Family Environment

Relationship

Cohesion

Expressiveness

Conflict

Personal Growth

Independence

Achievement Orientation

Intellectual-cultural Orientation

Active-Recreational Orientation

Moral-Religious Emphasis

System Maintenance

Organization

Control

Family Dynamics in the Acculturation Process: Conclusions

- When acculturation differs within families, the families are characterized by less cohesion (disengagement) and less adaptability. Age is a confounding factor (older children = > disengagement, < adaptability)
- **Marginalized** children report less family adaptability and more disengagement within the family (origin of support?)
- There were no differences between **Assimilated** and **Separated** children in terms of cohesion and adaptability.
- **Integrated** children reported that one person in the family helped them develop a healthy social perspective (social coping). At least one person in the family had resolved acculturation (> mobility and > time in country were confounding factors, immunity to moves and length in country of origin)
- **Integrated** children reported that facility in social language is an important factor in social interactions
- **Integrated** children reported positive levels of cohesion and adaptability in their families

Family Dynamics in the Acculturation Process: Conclusions

- **Marginalized** children reported that their families did not encourage expressiveness (especially about living in a foreign country)
- There were no differences among families in regards to conflict, independence, any orientation, or moral-religious emphasis
- All children reported high levels of achievement orientation in their families (American school factor?)
- There were no differences among **Separated**, **Assimilated**, and **Integrated** children in regards to organization and control
- **Marginalized** children reported that their families experienced high levels of control, but not organization

Effective Counseling Strategies: Individual Interventions

- Address acculturation stage (see handout) and attempts (or not) to acculturate.
- Assess the person's coping resources (protective factors)
- Investigate pre-migration and post-migration experiences for the person and the family (the role of mobility and language proficiency)
- Look into what migration has done to the family (perceptions and realities)
- Evaluate the person's language proficiency
- Assess the level of acculturation within the family (seek history of integration)
- Train in social skills (culturally appropriate)

Effective Counseling Strategies: Contextual Interventions

- Consistent, concerted efforts to protect students (e.g. sound policies and procedures, reliable enforcement of protective rules)
- Strong non-academic emphasis on student well-being (contextual/programatic and individual interventions)
- Creation of safe haven for students who are marginalized and separated
- Creation of places and processes that increase belonging and identification with the positive aspects of the school and certain social groups
- Focus on success (academically, emotionally, and socially)
- Enlist role models who have resolved successfully the acculturation issue
- Create social links for the marginalized and separated students (“buddy” programs do work!)
- Encourage students’ social connections outside of the school (e.g. other social circles that focus on existent skills or interests)