

The nature of acculturation and its relationship to health

Definition of acculturation

The process and nature of change that occurs to individuals and groups when groups and individuals of different cultures come into contact.

Models of acculturation

- The linear or uni-dimensional model
- Cross cultural, bi-dimensional model

The linear model

Migrants gradually become like the host group until they become assimilated with the majority host community.

The linear model

The host community is changed a little by the migrant community (eg starting to eat curries

But the migrant community changes the most.

This gave rise to the “melting pot” idea in the USA

The Melting Pot by Israel Zangwill

“America is God’s crucible, the great Melting Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and re-forming”

Problems with the linear model

- Do migrants want to merge with the majority?
- Is the majority population really all alike?
- Does the majority give equal welcome to all migrants?
- Does the melting pot really exist?

Berry's bi-dimensional model of acculturation

Acculturation depends on the value placed by migrants on:

- Their own culture
- The host culture

- And the possibility of change (including attitude of host community)

Berry's model of acculturation

	Wish to maintain own cultural identity	Does not wish to maintain own cultural identity
Maintaining relationship with other group is valued (and possible)	<i>Integration</i>	<i>Assimilation</i>
Maintaining relationship with other group is not valued (or not possible)	<i>Separation</i>	<i>Marginalisation</i>

Berry's model of acculturation

We therefore have 4 modes of acculturation:

- Integration
- Assimilation
- Separation
- Marginalisation

Variables affecting mode of acculturation

Majority/host community variables

- Degree of pluralism in host society
- Policies and attitudes in host society that ‘exclude’ minority groups (incl. racism)
- Prevailing economic conditions
- Prestige of the migrating group in host society

Variables affecting mode of acculturation

Minority/migrating group variables

Age and sex of individual

Years in host country

Age of arrival in host country

Prior knowledge of language and culture of host community

Education level attained & socio-economic status

Motives for migration (voluntary vs. involuntary)

Minority/migrating group variables

Attitudes towards acculturation

Settlement patterns

Social support and social networks

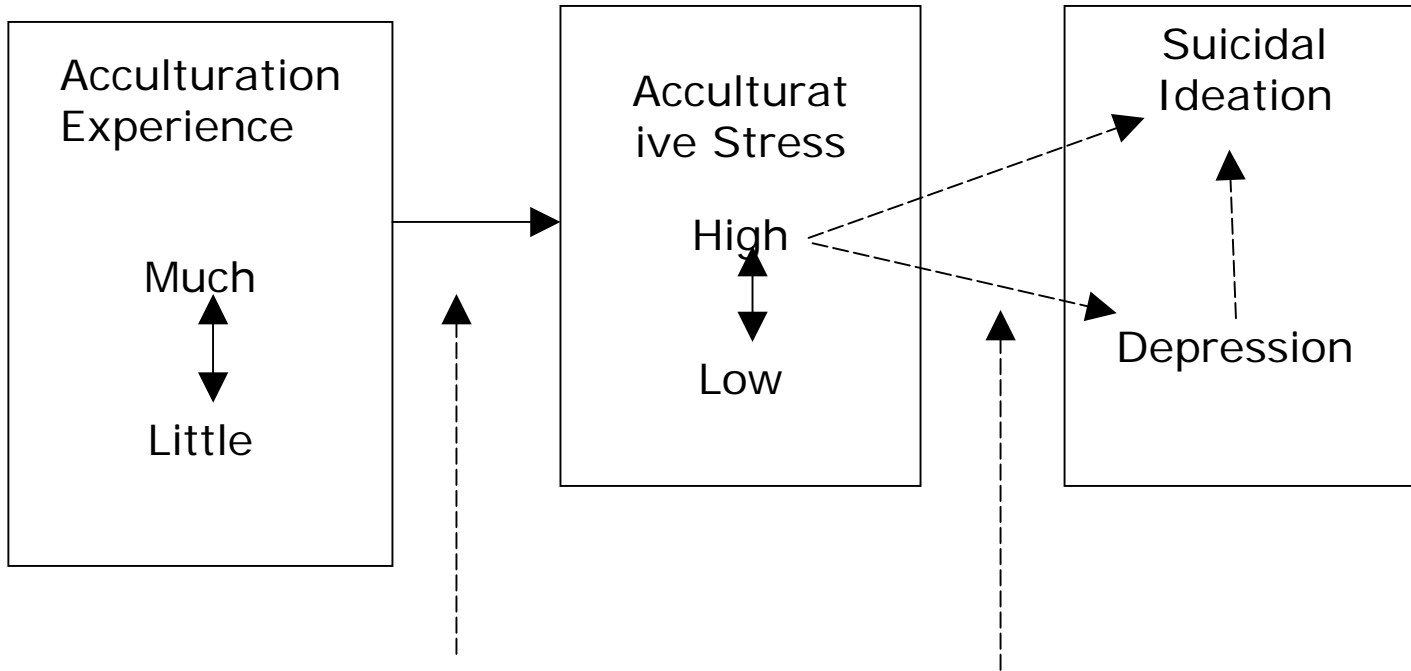
Contact experience with host society (how much and how pleasant)

Control over the acculturation process

Degree of congruity of expectations and realisations of ambitions (greater the discrepancy greater the acculturative stress)

Why is acculturation a useful concept?

- It helps us understand individuals and groups – why they do or do not change
- It may help formulate public policy
- It has links to health



Variables moderating acculturation.
Acculturative stress, depression, and
suicidal ideation

Not all forms of acculturation cause mental ill health


- Marginalisation
- Separation
- Assimilation
- Integration



Highest risk

Lowest risk

Link with physical health less well studied

- Risk of CVD in Japanese varied with degree of acculturation
 - Japanese in California
 - Japanese in Hawaii
 - Japanese in Japan
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- Highest risk
- Lowest risk

Measuring acculturation

Scales have been developed in USA,
Singapore, Canada, New Zealand,
Australia...

Measuring acculturation

....in diverse populations: Vietnamese,
Laotians, Australian aboriginals,
Hispanics, Filipinos, Canadian
Hungarians, Black Americans,
American Indians....

Measuring acculturation

In all these scales the most significant components of acculturation were:

- Language use
- Use of media (TV programmes etc.)
- Ethnicity of friends & acquaintances
- Perhaps type of food consumed

Summary

- Acculturation has different modes
- Some modes of acculturation linked to mental ill health
- Acculturation may explain changes in physical health after migration
- Similar components of acculturation seem to apply to many different groups
- Acculturation scales can help identify mode of acculturation