

A Phenomenological Study of Adaptability, Multiple Identities, and Acculturative Strengths as an Iranian Immigrant in Malaysia

Mehrdad F. Falavarjani (Corresponding Author)

Universiti Putra Malaysia

Seri Kembangan, Malaysia

Email: fazeli.mehrdad@gmail.com

Christine J. Yeh

Department of Counseling Psychology

University of San Francisco, United States

Received: July 21, 2018 Accepted: September 1, 2018 Published: September 30, 2018

doi:10.5296/ijssr.v6i2.13405 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/ijssr.v6i2.13405>

Abstract

Acculturation as a lived experience refers to cultural learning and adaptation in the context of continuous cross-cultural experience through the way acculturating individuals live in the real world. Retrospective phenomenological research and self-observation analysis in cross-cultural contexts may contribute to the field in various ways including theory development, counter narratives, and innovative interventions. The current phenomenological case study focuses on emergent acculturative strengths of adaptability and possible identities: 1) cultural colonialism; 2) climate of the new culture; 3) conscious and unconscious imitation; 4) freedom from social norms; 5) paradox of language competence; and 6) concept of marginality. Implications for new approaches to acculturation theory development and research are addressed.

Keywords: Acculturation, Phenomenology, Imitation, Colonialism, Climate, Marginality

1. Introduction

Acculturation refers to the dual process of the cultural, social, and psychological changes

caused by the interactions between people of varied cultures (Berry, 2005). These changes can happen as a consequence of almost any intercultural contact (e.g., globalization; Arnett, 2002). According to Ward and Geeraert (2016), acculturation occurs at two levels of individual and society (Berry, 2005). Broadly, as applied to individuals, acculturation means second-cultural acquisition as a result of contact with culturally different people, groups, and social influences (Gibson, 2001). However, at the societal level, acculturation refers to cultural diffusion, for example, the transfer of cultural norms, values, behaviors, and technologies from one society to another (Berry, 2005; Ward & Geeraert, 2016).

As seen, cultural difference is a concept of living experience that acculturating individuals undergo as they move from their society of origin to a new society of settlement. The approach of studying and perceiving acculturation as lived experience has received scant attention and this contributes to a conceptualization of acculturation as almost removed from real human experience (Rudmin, 2010a, 2010b; Skuza, 2007). This conceptualization has also focused primarily on cultural challenges and psychological difficulties versus emergent cultural strengths (Yeh, Kim, Pituc, & Atkins, 2008). For example, acculturation has been mainly studied under Berry's fourfold acculturation model (Berry, 1997). This traditional approach to understanding the acculturation process (Chirkov, 2009; Rudmin, 2003, 2006; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010) must be expanded to demonstrate that acculturation is deeply embedded in human experience and, hence, needs be understood in terms of how it is lived. It can be difficult, however, to put acculturation into a phenomenological perspective because it does not have static boundaries (Rudmin, 2003, 2006, 2010b; Skuza, 2007). Rather, it is a pervasive, dynamic, context-specific, and complex phenomenon that is experienced somewhat differently by each acculturating individual (Rudmin, 2010a; Skuza, 2007).

The current study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the context in which acculturation is experienced through the perspective of the first author's acculturative process as an Iranian immigrant living in Malaysia. This viewpoint is especially unique and relevant since it extends previous perspectives written about predominantly Anglo-Saxon settler countries, which focus on the specific cultural values and social policies of that country (Luke, Gordon, Alessia, & Sergio, 2018). It also represents an experience of immigration that is characterized by two countries' (Iran and Malaysia) that have similar status levels which include lenient visa policies, similar religious backgrounds, belonging to the developing country, having culturally heterogeneous people, and the availability of Iranian culture through local media and communities. There are also very few studies that focus on the lived experiences of Iranians in general (Arbabi, Yeh, Mahmud, & Salleh, 2016; Falavarjani, 2018; Falavarjani & Yeh, 2018). Finally, we seek to identify and define six important themes in the acculturation process that highlight possible identities, adaptability, and emergent acculturative strengths.

2. Methodology

A phenomenological approach was implemented to allow for a complex and fluid representation of the acculturation experience (Finlay, 2009; Rudmin, 2010a; Skuza, 2007;

Thomas, 1912) and to extend beyond qualitative interviewing as a primary source of information (Svend, 2016). This approach is meaningful because, ". . . *phenomenology relies on naive observations and thoughtfulness, not on new data nor on literature reviews*" (Rudmin, 2006, p. 68). Rudmin (2010a, p. 315) added "the evidence of phenomenology is neither based on numeric data nor on compiled literature, phenomenological reports are relatively rare in psychology, are unlikely to be formulaic in style. However, phenomenology includes an epistemological focus that may help to clarify the weaknesses of other research methods (Finlay, 2009). Rudmin (2010 a, b) describes the phenomenological approach as a "*scholar's retrospective self-reflection*". We believe this approach offers a humanizing and reflective perspective of acculturation that honors their unique experience while simultaneously offering new and often contradictory concepts for theory building (Finlay, 2009).

The first author, Mehrdad Falavarjani, utilized a phenomenological approach as an Iranian graduate student studying in Malaysia, to illuminate and emphasize acculturation phenomena that have not been well-studied in the psychological literature. As part of this approach, a brief history of Malaysia is provided to contextualize the acculturative experience and because it is an understudied cultural setting. Offering some historical background is also necessary to understand the potential influence of minority and majority individuals on one another and allows us to focus on six important concepts in acculturation research: 1) cultural colonialism; 2) climate of the new culture; 3) conscious and unconscious imitation; 4) freedom from social norms; 5) paradox of language competence; and 6) concept of marginality. Finally, we provide a paradoxical example of acculturating individuals in terms of language competency in the history of acculturation studies. This study also seeks to examine acculturation at individual and societal levels. For each level, we: 1) prioritize the individual's experience in narrative (Gómez-Estern, & de la Mata Benitez, 2013); 2) provide confirming and corroborating examples; and 3) connect the lived experience and applications of the phenomenon to extend beyond the author's unique context and life.

3. Acculturation Concepts

3.1 Acculturation Context: Malaysia

According to Reid's (2010) research on the history of Malaysia, Malaysia, along with the US and Australia, is best viewed as an immigrant society. The most recent Census Bureau's population survey (2016) reports that Malaysia has a population of 28.3 million of which 91.8% were Malaysian citizens and 8.2% were non-citizens. The citizens comprise the ethnic groups Bumiputera or Malay (67.4%), Chinese (24.6%), Indians (7.3%) and others (0.7%). Thus, 35.6% of the population consists of immigrants and minority groups. In addition, the survey reports that 60.4% of the population practices Islam; 19.2% Buddhism; 9.1% Christianity; 6.3% Hinduism; and 2.6% traditional Chinese religions such as Taoism. The rest, 2.4%, is accounted for by other faiths, including Animism, Folk religion, Sikhism and other belief systems. However, this data may be misleading as acknowledging the religion of Islam is a requirement for being Malay in the sense of the Malaysian Constitution. Therefore, the Malay by law is Muslim, their language is Malay, and they must govern by Malay rulers.

Although Malaysia's law and jurisprudence are based on the English common law, Muslim law is applicable only to Muslims, and is restricted to family law and religious observances.

Based on this history, there has been much debate on whether Malaysia is a secular state or an Islamic state. In addition, the cultural context of Malaysia is multiethnic, multicultural, multireligious, and multilingual. These diverse communities uphold distinct cultural identities, favoring a separationist ideology. Among these, there are huge numbers of legal and illegal international workers and international students occupied in Malaysia. Malaysia is a country with a long history of intercultural relations. This cultural priority has created a unique society where it is far more complex than the multicultural societies in other parts of the world with a liberal or multiculturalist preference in the law and policy towards minority groups and acculturating individuals.

3.2 Cultural Colonialism

According to Boas (1888/1940), acculturation is a phenomenon that universally processes: "*It is not too much to say that there are no people whose customs have developed uninfluenced by foreign culture that has not borrowed arts and ideas which it has developed in its own way*" (p. 631). He noted the acculturative admixture of English language with several other languages. Thus, the acculturation process at both social and individual levels is not always an infra-acculturation process, in which the "majority" culture influences the "minority" culture and the "minority" will assimilate somehow to the majority culture. In contrast, the process can alternatively be supra-acculturation (from a perceived lower status culture to a higher status culture).

Relatedly, Kohn (2010) describes colonialism as a practice of supremacy, which subjugates one dominant group of people to the other minority group, entailing the political, economic, and military control over a dependent land. The term "colony" originates from the Latin word "colonus", meaning farmer. Hence, the practice of colonialism usually refers to the transfers of inhabitants to a new land, where the arrivals settled as permanent citizens while embracing the political and cultural allegiances to the country of origin. This focus on acculturation research on "dominant cultures" such as the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand has emphasized how relatively "less powerful" immigrants and ethnic minorities, including indigenous peoples, adjust or assimilate to the dominant, majority culture. This research often times has a unidirectional focus and offers limited insight of how the majority cultures in fact learn and benefit from the strengths and assets of the immigrant community (Rudmin et al. 2016). In fact, Rudmin, Wang, and Castro (2016) assert that in acculturation terms, colonialism refers to the process in which the minority group is the political, military, economic, and cultural dominant group, and the native-born, demographic majority has to acculturate to the colonialist minority and ripe for improvement by acculturation.

3.3 Conscious and Unconscious Replication

In Mehrdad's, own acculturative experiences, conscious acculturative replication was first observed when he attended class at the University and saw an Iranian female classmate wear a kerchief, in an uncommon way. In fact, it resembled the Malaysian style of dress. After

class, out of curiosity, he approached her and asked about her reason for wearing this kerchief. She explained *"through following the Malay style of wearing a scarf, I have a sense of belonging"*. She continued *"I am the only foreign girl in the class and you are the only male, I believe I should integrate with them and this helps me to socialize"*. Also, he was surprised when he saw many international students, especially African Nigerian males, in the university wear a Malay shirt in public. He also observed Iranian students wear a traditional Malay cloth instead of a suit or an Iranian dress, in their doctoral defense.

The interest in sharing cultural practices extended to language use and habits in Malaysia. For example, the catchy term of "la" among the people of Malaysia was regularly used among Iranian immigrants. In this practice, "la" is added to the end of the word such as "okay-la" which is very common in the everyday communication among Malaysians. This practice has been widely adopted by international students so they are able to have a smooth conversation with locals since it delivers a sense of humor and familiarity. However, Mehrdad was not aware of this practice until he took the English exam in graduate school. In the speaking part of this exam with a local examiner, he subconsciously used the expression "okay-la" to show his understanding of her explanation. This common phrase spurred a smile from the examiner, as it allowed her to see how this term has changed the phonology of the English language.

Nonetheless, examining conscious and unconscious imitations and replications could potentially contribute to acculturation research since it can reveal more about the behavior of acculturating individuals. One of the striking challenges in acculturation studies is that they often do not focus on specific and often non-consequential attitudes, strategies, and behavior that culminate into larger acculturative shifts. Since social psychologists have previously indicated that attitudes often connect to outcome behaviors (Glasman & Albarracín, 2006), mimicry behaviors may be effective variables to measure if attitudes accompany behavior or if the imitative behaviors lead to new attitudes and social identities.

3.4 Freedom from Social Norms

Traditional approaches to acculturation research often focus on distress, oppression, or other negative conditions as outcome variables. However, we examine the developing strengths of acculturating individuals. Historically, living in another country has been depicted as a rewarding experience for artists, and there is abundant evidence that many creative individuals produce their best work while living abroad. In fact, all four winners of the Nobel Prize in literature from Ireland (Yeats, Shaw, Beckett, and Heaney) spent significant portions of their lives living in another country. In addition to writers, many famous painters, (e.g., Gauguin and Picasso) and composers (e.g., Handel, Prokofiev, etc.) created many of their most admired works while living abroad. As shared by the novelist Richard Stern:

"Once I went [abroad], it was extremely exciting for me to become a new personality, to be detached from everything that bound me, noticing everything that was different. That noticing of difference was very important. How things were said that were different, the different formulas" (Cf. Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 129).

As the first author reflects, a positive aspect of being new to a country is the freedom one

experiences when released from the social norms of one's first culture, while being exempted from the social norms of the new culture. One is autonomous because those around you have few expectations of how you should behave. In the case of Iranians living in Malaysia, Vijenthil Nair (11 June 2011) explicitly describe this as follows: "*Most Iranians in Malaysia bask in the comforts of a life free from ideological pressures and from, in one exile's words*".

In addition, Siamak, 40, has, like many Iranian professionals, started his own business, Yummy Restaurant, switching the menu from burgers to kebabs. He shares, "*This is the place where we can have a normal life without fear*". Hence, the freedom of social norms may be a certain factor that allows acculturating individuals to feel liberated from the social norms and limitations and brings about the cognitive freedom and inspiration to pursue and accomplish creative works.

3.5 Climate of the New Culture

Another important factor in acculturation studies that has received almost no attention, is the impact of the physical environment including the influence of climate and geographical features on the intellect and the emotions of individuals. In the first author's own acculturative experience, climate was a significant attraction and factor in the adaptation of Iranian students. He observed a great number of students from North of Iran living near the Caspian Sea where the tropical, hot, and humid climate is similar to that of Malaysia. These Iranian immigrants adapted well and in fact extended their residence in Malaysia. This life satisfaction extended beyond the geographical environment with Malaysia. At various social events, parties, and ceremonies, Mehrdad observed how they enjoyed eating and drinking the local Malay food and drinks outdoors whereas he (as an Iranian from the middle of Iran was accustomed to dry weather) could barely tolerate the food and climate since he always felt uncomfortably hot when consuming spicy food in such humid weather.

Hence, the role of climate in cultural adaptation has received minimal attention in research (Scheffran, Marmer, & Sow, 2012). We believe that individuals immigrating from a very different climate (e.g., from dry to humid climate), may experience a difficult adjustment. It might be useful for future researchers to investigate this variable and assess whether those who live in the same climate in both the home and host culture will better adapt to the new environment and how this similarity may influence their home and host cultural identities.

3.6 Paradoxical Example of Language

According to the acculturation literature, language competence has been recognized as one of the most important aspects of a culture and the cultural assimilation or biculturalism (Kang, 2006; Lewin, 1945; Masgoret & Ward, 2006; Wilson, Ward, & Fischer, 2013). For example, Rudmin, (2006) expressed that since cultural knowledge and abilities, for example, language competence, cannot be "unlearned" or "shed", acculturation may always lead to some degree of biculturalism. However, the validity of this claim has not been adequately tested or examined. We present a few paradoxical cases that reveal the host culture's language competence may not be reliable enough to universally explain the acculturative process of acculturating individuals.

The first author played volleyball twice a week along with other Iranian fellows. In this group, there was also a German man who was married to a Muslim Malay. He became friends with the German man, and invited him to his Persian dinner parties. The man was psychologically healthy and worked at one of the prestigious mobile companies in Malaysia. He soon noticed that the German man didn't speak Malay and choose to maintain his Christianity despite being married to a Muslim Malay. However, he did mention "*I just symbolically converted to Islam in order to marry my Malay spouse*". He did not practice any Muslim traditions, and in fact, kept his Christianity traditions. In addition, he spoke German fluently and English at a basic level to get by.

Second, the first author noted that one of his Iranian friends, had difficulty passing the minimum university requirement in English. Since he had non-graduate student status, he was given six months to improve his language performance. He hired a female Canadian English tutor to help tutor him. He soon met her husband, who was married to a Chinese-Malaysian businessman who only spoke English and never learned Malay.

Third, the first author was a well-known statistician a well-known university since he conducted statistical workshops for graduate students. Thus, students occasionally consulted with him about their statistical problems. In fact, once an Arab Yemeni female doctoral student asked him to help her with one of her statistical problems in her dissertation. After consulting her, she asked him to teach her privately in her house as she could not come to the university. She lived with her brother who married a Malay Muslim. After several sessions, Mehrdad noticed, as she explained, her brother could not speak Malay at all and communicated with his spouse in English. They also have a four-year old child as well. He asked, "*What language does the boy speak?*", "*he only speaks English and recently we came to know that he must speak Arabic as well*", the girl replied. I asked "*Why not Malay!*", "*I do not know, is it important?*", She replied.

Fifth, when the first author was a research assistant at Monsh University, Malaysian Campus, one of his duties was to teach statistics to undergraduate students. He taught three Chinese, one Indian, two Portuguese and one Pakistani student. The Chinese, Indian and Portuguese students were born in Malaysia, but the Pakistani student was born in London and held a Pakistani-British identity. None of the students were able to speak, or write their own heritage language. Nor did any of his students have language proficiency in Malay. However, with the exception of the Pakistani-British student, all students recognized themselves as Malaysian, clearly claiming and expressing a national identity. However, the Pakistani-British student revealed more of a cosmopolitan identity.

Finally, as an Iranian graduate student studying the acculturative experience of Iranians living in Malaysia, the first author originally followed the traditional approach of the Berry acculturation Model (Berry, 1970, 1980), Using this framework, his results seemed paradoxical. For example, respondents were asked to rate their Malay language proficiency on a 4-point Likert-type scale (not at all = 1, a little bit = 2, good = 3, and fluent = 4), the frequency of 184 "not at all", 118 "a little bit", 19 "good" and 7 "fluent" was obtained in his sample (N = 328). In addition, using the Vancouver Acculturation Index developed by Ryder,

Alden, and Paulhus (2000), through midpoint scale spilt, the figures of 35, 11, 156, and 98 were noted for the marginal, assimilation, separation and integration, categories respectively. However, he found no correlation and no significant difference across the language groups. In fact, no assimilationists even spoke Malay at a basic level.

The cases described included a few resemblances. First, the acculturation process in Malaysia in comparison to western cultures highlights a dominant influence of the English language in western cultures (Rudmin, 2006). Second, the perceptions of cultural superiority shape the extent to which individuals are acculturated. Underpinned by cognitive-dissonance theory (Festinger, 1962), people from a perceived "superior" culture, do not feel pressure to assimilate to Malay culture which may be considered a lower status culture in comparison to their home culture. From the examples described, the immigrants who married Malay individuals did not embrace many core aspects of the culture such as language or daily traditions. This supports the idea that the acculturation process is an infra-acculturation process, especially when the host culture is not integrated with prominent cultures within the country.

3.7 *The Concept of Marginality in Malaysia*

A complex concept in acculturation is the idea of marginalization (Rudmin, 2003). This concept fluctuates in both meaning and measurement across the fields of anthropology, sociology, psychology, and among individuals who belong to the dominant or minority community (Rudmin, 2006). Researchers delineated marginality as a bicultural condition for minorities (Berry, 1970, pp. 239-241; Sommerlad & Berry, 1970, p. 24). For instance, Glaser (1958, p. 34) stated that bicultural competence results in a marginal person who "favors a pluralistic society in which he can feel identified with several ethnic groups."(p.34). However, Wirth (1945) articulated that such a concept for minority groups as follows;

"A group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination."

In a similar vein, the marginalized are a distinctive social group, whose rights are singled out by the dominant members of the host society and resulting in unequal treatment leading to acts of discrimination, social ostracism, and oppression. The notion of marginalization is further developed in the field of cross-cultural psychology. For example, Berry (1970) wrote that socio-cultural marginality was established from "a set of conditions characteristic of cultural contact between two groups, one dominant over the other" and that psychological marginality is a "*Characteristic of persons in the marginal situation. . . Traits thought to be included in this pattern are: aggression, suspicion, uncertainty, victimization-rejection, anxiety, and a lack of solidarity.*" Further, Berry (1980, p. 260) stated that minority individuals of different cultural backgrounds who move into acculturative contact with the dominant culture can contribute to the minority groups' experience with marginality. This is often caused by a crisis of choice between conflicting cultural identities and attitudes, and forcing the minority individual to choose between the acculturation options of assimilation, rejection, or integration.

In cross-cultural psychology, marginalization as rejection of both dominant and minority cultures was not mentioned in the 1970s and 1980s because it had not yet been conceived as an option arising from a decision, but instead marginality was conceived as the default consequence of continuing in the original situation of bicultural marginality. Born (1970), an American anthropologist, had theorized that four modes of acculturation are adaptive responses to stress faced in a new culture, namely acculturative stress of marginals who reject both dominant and minority cultures.

In 1972, Berry, Evans, & Rawlinson logically reasoned that there should be a type of acculturation defined by minorities, to say "no" to the minority culture and "no" to the dominant cultural society, but have it called "inherently contradictory" (p. 29) for a cultural group to so choose its own demise. In 1976, "deculturation (saying no to the minority and dominant culture)" was adapted for such a group, but a proviso said: "*Common sense and pilot work indicated that such an outcome was not chosen by anyone*". In other words, "It should be noted that attitude items suitable for the deculturation response are almost never accepted in a population; thus, no scale has been developed to assess it" (Berry, Kalin, & Taylor, 1977, p. 132). However, the deculturalism construct was confounded with acculturative stress later in 1983;

" . . . it is accompanied by a good deal of collective and individual confusion and anxiety [and] is characterized by striking out against the larger society and by feelings of alienation, loss of identity, and what has been termed acculturative stress. This option is deculturation, in which groups are out of cultural and psychological contact with either their traditional culture or the larger society. . . When stabilized in a non-dominant group, it constitutes the classical situation of 'marginality' "(Berry, 1983, p. 69).

However, Morrell (2001) argued that marginality does not necessarily mean "excluded" and such a construct could be misinterpreted:

"Excluded is the wrong word, because it denotes being deliberately 'shut out'. They are only 'shut out' as a result of the normal social processes we all unconsciously subscribe to, and abide by, not as an act of deliberate social exclusion directed solely at them... In a certain sense, they can be said to have excluded themselves by their own deviance, by being 'square pegs in round holes'. As such, definitions involve deliberation or blame, which is a misleading and non-insightful element in the definition. So 'marginals' and 'outsiders' are more neutral and thus more appropriate labels for them".

In line with Morrell's criticism, Rudmin and Ahmadzadeh (2001) excoriated that the ethical concept to be labeled for minority groups needs greater care and attention. They expressed the idea that Marginality concept should reflect theory and assessment of Marginalization. The rejection of both minority and dominant cultures should be conceived as "*I prefer something other than those two cultures*" but not as "*I am distressed because I chose to have no cultural society*" (Rudmin, 2003, 2006). This distress is not a necessary aspect of detesting two cultures or of preferring something else, it can be psychological needs of human's

self-acculturation (Maslow, 1970), a preference for a sub-culture, or a third culture. Thus, saying NO to both cultures should be called "multiculturalism" or "cultural autonomy" rather than deculturation (Rudmin & Ahmadzadeh, 2001).

In the first author's own acculturative experience, however, the term minority seems to express marginality as new concepts such as bohemianism and cosmopolitanism, illustrate living styles in the context of Malaysian society. The term bohemian has a French origin, and was first used in the English language in the nineteenth century. According to the American College Dictionary, a bohemian is "a person with artistic or intellectual tendencies, who lives and acts with no regard for conventional rules of behavior." Therefore, the bohemians originally were associated with unorthodox or anti-establishment political or social viewpoints, which were often expressed through free love, frugality, and/or voluntary poverty and established to describe the marginal and impoverished artists, writers, journalists, musicians, and actors in major European cities. However, the unorthodox or anti-establishment political or social viewpoints in Malaysia can be seen through the rejection of simple life style and live like—how they assume—westerners live.

However, the term cosmopolitan, originated from the Greek term kosmopolites which denotes "citizen of the world". The term has been adopted to express the idea that all people, regardless of their political and social attachment, are inhabitants in a single community. Historically, cosmopolitanism was first explicitly used by Cynic Diogenes, a Socratically inspired philosopher in the West, in the fourth century BCE. It is mentioned that "*when he was asked where he came from, he replied, I am a citizen of the world [kosmopolitês]*" (Diogenes Laertius VI 63). In a similar vein, in the study of Iranians in Norway, Rudmin and Ahmadzadeh (2001) described that some Iranian families in their home spoke English. They did not speak Norwegian and/or Farsi because they wanted their kids to be accepted into the global American culture. Hence, this phenomenon should be recognized and acknowledged since it is persuasive and seen in other cultures.

4. Conclusion

Although acculturation studies have been in existence for many decades, they have yet to explore the important role of geographic location, contexts, and the specific communities being investigated. Through the first author's own acculturative experience in Malaysia—we present phenomenological observations that are not well represented in the acculturation research literature, and in fact are paradoxical to the history of acculturation studies. These experiences are common in many parts of the world, yet are invisible due to their basis in non-dominant societies such as the US. However, new acculturation theory needs to be developed to integrate these phenomena into more encompassing explanations and to further interrogate the existing trend of acculturation research to focus primarily on immigration to the US, Canada, Australia, Europe and other "high status" countries.

Acknowledgement

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

References

- Arbabi, K., Yeh, C. J., Mahmud, Z., & Salleh, A. (2016). From monocultural to multicultural: adaptation of Iranian immigrant adolescents in Malaysia. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 32(3), 371-402. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0743558416630811>
- Arnett, J. J. (2002). The psychology of globalization. *American Psychologist*, 57(10), 774.
- Berry, J. W. (1970). Marginality, stress and ethnic identification in an acculturated Aboriginal community. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 1(3), 239-252. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/135910457000100303>
- Berry, J. W. (1980). Social and cultural change. In H. C. Triandis & R. W. Brislin (Eds.), *Handbook of cross-cultural psychology*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Berry, J. W. (1983). *Acculturation: A comparative analysis of alternative forms*. New York: University Press of America.
- Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology*, 46(1), 5-34. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1997.tb01087.x>
- Berry, J. W. (2005). Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29(6), 697-712. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2005.07.013>
- Berry, J. W., Evans, C., & Rawlinson, H. (1972). *Post-secondary educational opportunity for the Ontario Indian population*. Toronto: Ontario Government Bookstore.
- Berry, J. W., Kalin, R., & Taylor, D. M. (1977). *Multiculturalism and ethnic attitudes in Canada*. Ottawa: Ministry of Supply and Services.
- Boas, F. (1888/1940). *The aims of ethnology*. Reprinted in F. Boas, Race, language, and culture (pp. 626-638). New York: Macmillan.
- Born, D. O. (1970). Psychological adaptation and development under acculturative stress: Toward a general model. *Social Science & Medicine* (1967), 3(4), 529-547. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0037-7856\(70\)90025-9](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0037-7856(70)90025-9)
- Chirkov, V. (2009). Critical psychology of acculturation: What do we study and how do we study it, when we investigate acculturation? *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 33(2), 94-105. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2008.12.004>
- Falavarjani, M. F. (2018). Acculturation. In L. Lambert & N. Pasha-Zaidi (Eds). *An introduction to psychology for the Middle East (and beyond)* (p.398). Newcastle Upon Tyne, The UK: Cambridge. ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-1182-8
- Falavarjani, M. F., & Yeh, J. C. (2018). The impact of acculturation identification and acculturative stress on creativity among Iranian immigrants living in Malaysia, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(13), 2219-2239, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1366301>
- Festinger, L. (1962). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. The US: Stanford University Press.

- Finlay, L. (2009). Debating phenomenological methods. *Phenomenology & Practice*, 3(1), 6-25.
- Gibson, M. A. (2001). Immigrant adaptation and patterns of acculturation. *Human Development*, 44(1), 19-23. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000057037>
- Glaser, D. (1958). Dynamics of Ethnic Identification. *American Sociological Review*, 23(1), 31-40. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2088621>
- Glasman, L. R., & Albarracín, D. (2006). Forming attitudes that predict future behavior: a meta-analysis of the attitude-behavior relation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 132(5), 778-822. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.132.5.778>
- Kang, S. M. (2006). Measurement of acculturation, scale formats, and language competence: Their implications for adjustment. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 37(6), 669-693.
- Kohn, M. (2010). Post-colonial theory. In D. Bell (Ed.), *Ethics and World Politics* (pp. 200-218). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lewin, K. (1945). *Resolving social conflicts*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Malaysia Census Bureau. (2016). Population & demography: Percent of distribution of population by ethnic group, Malaysia. Retrieved from [Link](#)
- Masgoret, A. M., & Ward, C. (2006). Culture learning approach to acculturation. In D. L. Sam & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of acculturation psychology* (pp. 58-77). New York, NY, US: Cambridge University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511489891.008>
- Maslow, A. H. (1970). *Motivation and personality* (2nd Ed., Vol. 2), New York: Harper & Row.
- Morrell, P. (2001). On deviance, marginality and social exclusion. <http://www.homeint.org/morrell/otherarticles/marginality.htm>
- Rudmin, F. W. (2003). Critical history of the acculturation psychology of assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. *Review of General Psychology*, 7(1), 3-37.
- Rudmin, F. W. (2006). Debate in science: The case of acculturation. *AnthroGlobe Journal*, Retrieved Nov 1, 2015, from http://www.anthroglobe.info/docs/rudminf_acculturation_061204.pdf
- Rudmin, F. W. (2010a). Phenomenology of acculturation: Retrospective reports from the Philippines, Japan, Quebec, and Norway. *Culture & Psychology*, 16(3), 313-332.
- Rudmin, F. W. (2010b). Editorial: Steps towards the renovation of acculturation research paradigms: What scientists' personal experiences of migration might tell science? *Culture & Psychology*, 16(3), 299 – 312. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X10371140>
- Rudmin, F. W., & Ahmadzadeh, V. (2001). Psychometric critique of acculturation psychology: The case of Iranian migrants in Norway. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 42(1), 41-56.

Ryder, A., Alden, L., & Paulhus, D. (2000). Is acculturation unidimensional or bidimensional? A head-to-head comparison in the prediction of personality, self-identity and adjustment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79(1), 49-65.

Scheffran, J., Marmer, E., & Sow, P. (2012). Migration as a contribution to resilience and innovation in climate adaptation: Social networks and co-development in Northwest Africa. *Applied Geography*, 33, 119-127. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apgeog.2011.10.002>

Schwartz, S. J., Unger, J. B., Zamboanga, B. L., & Szapocznik, J. (2010). Rethinking the concept of acculturation: Implications for theory and research. *American Psychologist*, 65(4):237-51. [HTTP://DX.DOI.ORG/ 10.1037/a0019330](http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0019330).

Skuza, J. A. (2007). Humanizing the understanding of the acculturation experience with phenomenology. *Human Studies*, 30(4), 447-465.

Sommerlad, E. A., & Berry, J. W. (1970). The role of ethnic identification in distinguishing between attitudes towards assimilation and integration of a minority racial group. *Human Relations*, 23(1), 23-29. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/001872677002300103>

Svend, B. (2016). Methodological breaching experiments: Steps toward theorizing the qualitative interview. *Culture & Psychology*, 22(4), 520-533. [HTTP://DX.DOI.ORG/ 10.1177/1354067X16650816](http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1354067X16650816)

Thomas, W. I. (1912). Race psychology: Standpoint and questionnaire, with particular reference to the immigrant and the Negro. *American Journal of Sociology*, 17(6), 725-775.

Vijenth Nair (11 June 2011). Iranians feeling at home in Malaysia. *The Star*. Retrieved 19 August 2015 from [Link](#).

Ward, C., & Geeraert, N. (2016). Advancing acculturation theory and research: The acculturation process in its ecological context. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 8, 98-104. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2015.09.021>

Wilson, J., Ward, C., & Fischer, R. (2013). Beyond culture learning theory: What can personality tell us about cultural competence? *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 44(6), 900-927. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022113492889>

Wirth, L. (1945). The problem of minority groups. In R. Linton (Ed.). *The science of man in the world crisis* (pp. 347–372). New York: Columbia University Press.

Yeh, C. J., Kim, A. B., Pituc, S. T., & Atkins, M. (2008). Poverty, loss, and resilience: The story of Asian immigrant youth. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 55 (1), 34-48. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.55.1.34>

Copyright Disclaimer

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).