A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Acculturation Styles and Identity Formations of Immigrant Adults

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Abstract

This study is part of an ongoing research examining immigrant adults in Canada from across the world. The research provides a qualitative analysis of acculturative styles and ego-identity statues from the participants involved. We used a revised Ego-Identity Status Interview (Marcia, 1966, 1993) and in an one on one format interviewed participants from a variety of nations (e.g., India, China, Russia, Nigeria, Germany). While assessing identity through Marcia's traditional domains (occupation, religion, politics, gender roles & sexuality) a new domain of ethno-cultural identity was included to examine the context of cultural transition. A detailed examination of acculturation styles were observed along with expected cultural distance (Hofstede, 1993) from the country of origin and Canadian culture.

A Brief History

Research by John Berry and associates from 1967-1997 and
James Marcia from 1966-1993 laid the ground work for this study
by developing the models of acculturation styles and identity statuses.

Tonks and Paranjpe (1999; 2000) researched Ego-Identity development in the
context of Acculturation highlighting age at immigration and years spent in Canada
as important factors.

They also found Identity Statues and Acculturative attitudes paired up,
 with Foreclosure and Assimilation often coming together while
 Achievement and Integration were commonly associated.

What Are We Looking At?

Berry's Scheme of Acculturative Attitude Styles (Berry, 1997)

	Maintain Culture	Leave Culture
Take Host Culture	Integration	Assimilation
Avoid Host Culture	Separation	Marginalisation

Marcia's Scheme of Ego-Identity Statuses (Marcia, 1993)

	Exploration	No Exploration
Commitment	Achievement	Foreclosure
No Commitment	Moratorium	Diffusion

Participants

Our participants were selected from Camosun College,
the University of Victoria and the surrounding community.

There were 23 participants (17 females and 6 males)

Ages ranged from 18-31 with a mean age of 23 years of age

They immigrated from 19 different countries in:
Europe (8), Asia (10), Africa (4) and North America (1)
and provide a large array of different cultures and religions.

Interviews & Scoring

The Ego-Identity Interview is a semi-structured interview examining ego identity search and commitment across the domains of:
 Occupation, Religion, Politics, Gender Roles& Sexuality

The addition of a domain of ethnicity (Tonks, 2004) enable assessment of **Acculturation style** and Ego Identity development in the domain of culture and ethnicity

Each domain of the interview was scored on the identity statues and an overall status was also determined showing dominant and possible co-existent statuses

Inter-rater reliability estimates are 91% among scorers

Ego-Identity Statues vs. Acculturation styles

Chi2 =11.31; Sig. = .023	Diffusion	Foreclosure	Moratorium	Achievement
Marginalization	0	0	0	0
Separation	0	5	3	0
Assimilation	0	1	3	0
Integration	0	0	8	3

Acculturative Styles vs Ego-Identity (Ethnicity)

Chi2 = 24.644 Sig. = <.001	Diffusion	Foreclosure	Moratorium	Achievement
Marginalization	0	0	0	0
Separation	0	7	1	0
Assimilation	0	1	3	0
Integration	0	0	2	9

Acculturative Styles

"So, likewise, I am Nigerian, but, um, there are also aspects of Canada that I'd definitely like to, I'd like to and I am, integrating in my life, which is making me a better person"
- Katimba (Integration)

"before I came to Canada I hope I can make friends will some Canadians but I tried and failed so I now I am I really get used to involved in Chinese community"
 -Min (Separation)

"I don't feel like I belong there anymore, Canada is home for me"   -Darren (Assimilation)

Culture Distance & Stress as Factors

We examined Hofsteade's (1993) idea of cultural distance (Independent and Interdependent) but we did not find any significant findings in the areas of Ego-Identity or Acculturation styles.

There was also no significant data found to show a connection to stress to any one style or status

Myriam

Bio:
Female
Saudi Arabia
22 years of age
In Canada for 2.5 years
Muslim
Wears head scarf
High stress levels

"Honestly I've never been interested in engineering" and "I'm interested in art generally but um considering the job opportunities in Saudi I figured it's not a good choice

"I don't think it would be a good idea" and "if I consider my religious beliefs this is not acceptable or appropriate"

"Not even 1%" and "I just can't accept that no"

"Some people where not happy that I would be living here by myself"

"Very Stressful" and "100"

Zhang

Bio:
Female
China
21 years of age
In Canada for 2 years
High stress levels

"I like psychology and but um I'm not sure about my future career so I just think kinda study for kinda science is helpful"

"Maybe I will work several years in Canada and then back in China but um I always change my ideas"

"I think if you come from different , if you have different background different cultures and maybe our values are so different so maybe it hard to get along for very long time"

"I don't like social networking"

Mahala

Bio:
Female
Morocco
19 years of age
In Canada for 6 years
Low stress levels

"I'm taking a whole bunch of math courses… I'm looking into engineering, going in that field so now I'm taking all the courses required for, engineering" and "I started looking into biochemical engineering at UBC because that's the only campus in the province that offers it"

"I would consider myself about 45% Canadian, 55% Moroccan"

"We all live together we have to integrate the same system, we have to cooperate with one another but at the same time we are all so different because we come from different backgrounds, we have different mentalities"

Summary & Discussion

There is a richness that can be discovered by the use of the qualitative analysis in determining Acculturation Styles and Ego-Identity Statuses

There is a variation of results across different domains and overall styles that vary from each individual person.

People can find different results from the same country and that further highlights the individual difference in each person and each style.

There was no significant results between Cultural distance or Stress when looking at Ego-Identity and Acculturation

Significant results were seen when comparing Ego-Identity and Acculturation in the areas of Separation with Foreclosure and Integration with Achievement especially in the domain of Ethnicity