IMMIGRATION AND ACCULTURATION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand immigration as a major contributor to cultural diversity.
- Explain culture shock and reverse culture shock.
- Critically review acculturation models.
- Identify the communication strategies that facilitate cross-cultural adaptation.
INTRODUCTION

It goes without saying that our society is becoming more culturally and linguistically diverse by the day. An important contributor to cultural diversity is the migration of people. Some undertake voluntary migration and others are forced to do so: immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, businesspeople, international students and so on. Globalization and communication technologies not only redefine the mobility of people in contemporary societies, they also delineate new parameters for interpreting immigration. Historically, immigration referred to the restricted cross-border movements of people, emphasizing the permanent relocation and settlement of usually unskilled, often indentured or contracted labourers who were displaced by political turmoil and thus had little option other than resettlement in a new country. Today, growing affluence and the emergence of a new group of skilled and educated people have fuelled a new global movement of migrants who are in search of better economic opportunities, an enhanced quality of life, greater political freedom and higher expectations. These people, known as skilled migrants, form an integral part of the modern-day immigrant population. In addition, refugees and asylum seekers, usually from countries and regions in political turmoil, war, conflict or economic crisis, constitute a significant number of the displaced people in the world. Statistical data from the Pew Research Center (2016) revealed that nearly one in 100 people worldwide are displaced from their homes. This is the highest share of the world’s population that has been forcibly displaced since the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) began collecting data on displaced people in 1951. Relocated into the legal and political institutions of the settlement culture, immigrants and refugees aspire to a high quality of life, a good education for themselves or their children, autonomy in their choice of work and economic stability. These goals, however, have to be achieved alongside a journey of acculturation, a process through which immigrants adjust into the settlement culture. This journey not only involves a mental reconciliation of sometimes incompatible pressures for both assimilation into the settlement culture and differentiation from it, but also affects immigrants’ economic survival in the settlement country.

This chapter discusses the immigration and acculturation of mainly immigrants. First, we provide a historical review of immigration as a key contributor to cultural diversity, along with discussions of multiculturalism and its differentiated benefits for host nationals and immigrants. The chapter then defines and explains the concepts of diaspora and transnationalism. Next, we explain culture shock and reverse culture shock, as experienced by people who are in cultural transition. We critically review the dominant models of acculturation and use examples to illustrate their application. Finally, the chapter identifies a range of personal, social, cultural and political factors that shape acculturation processes and outcomes as well as communication strategies to facilitate immigrants’ cross-cultural adaptation.
IMMIGRATION AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Human migration is more than 1 million years old and continues in response to complex human cultural and existential circumstances. In modern times, profound changes in the world’s political and economic order have generated large movements of people in almost every region. Viewed in a global context, the total world population of immigrants, that is people living outside their country of birth or citizenship, is huge. More than a decade ago, Massey and Taylor (2004: 1) wrote that if migrants, estimated at some 160 million, were united in a single country, they would ‘create a nation of immigrants’. By 2015, the number of international migrants, or persons living in a country other than where they were born, reached 244 million (including almost 20 million refugees) for the world as a whole, which is a 41 per cent increase compared to the year 2000, according to data presented by the United Nations (2016).

Migrants and refugees

Following the lifting of restrictions on race-based immigration in the 1950s and 1960s, Asians and Africans began to migrate in large numbers to North America, Australasia and Europe. There has also been substantial migration from Latin America into the United States, and significant labour migration into newly industrialized nations, such Korea, Malaysia and Singapore, during the 1970s and 1980s (Brubaker, 2001). In Europe, the countries with the highest emigration rates until 1960 were Italy, Spain, Portugal, former Yugoslavia and Greece (Vukeljic, 2008). There is widespread consensus among migration scholars that since the 1980s, migration has become one of the most important factors in global change (Castles, 2000). According to a report from the International Organization for Migration (2006), the number of international migrants is thought to have reached between 185 and 192 million in 2005, an upward trend that is likely to continue. A salient feature of the Asia Pacific system is the increasing scale and significance of female migration (Ehrenreich and Russell-Hochschild, 2002). For example, the massive economic development of Malaysia, which began after the implementation of the New Economy Policy (NEP) in the 1970s, provided widespread opportunities for the employment of local and foreign workers (Chin, 2003). The higher wages and status of industrial work attracted many Malaysian women to the workforce, which has created problems in household labour. To resolve this, Malaysians hire low-wage female domestic workers from other countries, such as the Philippines and Indonesia. Consequently, the number of foreign maids increased from a few hundred in the 1970s to around 228,000 in 2010 (Asrul Hadi, 2011).

Forced migration, such as migration due to war, violence, civil unrest, economic dislocation and political persecution, creates another category of migrants: refugees and asylum seekers.
The plight of refugees has gained new prominence, with the number of displaced people hitting a record high across the world of 65.6 million in 2016 (UNHCR, 2018). This figure is more than the population of the UK, is an increase of 300,000 on the year before, and is the largest number ever recorded, according to the UNHCR. Of the more than 70,000 refugees who have been admitted to the United States in the fiscal year 2016, the largest numbers have come from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burma and Syria (Pew Research Center, 2016). Syrian refugees currently attract significant attention globally, as they are a visible by-product of regional power struggles and a reminder to Americans of the threat terrorism poses (Glaser, 2016). Around 12.5 million (six in ten) Syrians are now displaced from their homes, up from less than 1 million in 2011, according to a Pew Research Center (2016) analysis of global refugee data. Displaced Syrians worldwide include those internally displaced within Syria, refugees living in neighbouring countries and those relocated to other countries, such as Canada and the United States, and those in Europe awaiting a decision on their asylum application. European Union countries plus Norway and Switzerland received a record 1.3 million refugees in 2015. About half of the refugees in 2015 trace their origins to just three countries: Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. Among the destination countries, Germany, Hungary and Sweden together received more than half of the asylum seeker applications in 2015 (Pew Research Center, 2016).

Diaspora and transnationalism

Regardless of reasons for migration, migrants form diaspora communities in the settlement country. The term diaspora is based on the Greek terms speiro, meaning ‘to sow’, and the preposition dia, meaning ‘over’. The Greeks used diaspora to mean migration and colonization. In Hebrew, the term initially referred to the settling of scattered colonies of Jews outside Palestine after the Babylonian exile, and came to have a more general connotation of people settled away from their ancestral homeland. The meaning of diaspora has shifted over time and now refers not only to traditional migrant groups, such as Jews, but also much wider communities comprised of voluntary migrants living in more than one culture. Diasporas are not temporary; they are lasting communities. Such a community maintains cultural identification with members outside the national borders of space and time in order to live within the new environment (Clifford, 1997).

Many migrants today build social networks that cross geographic, cultural and political borders. Basch, Schiller and Blanc (1994) used the concept of transnationalism to refer to the process by which migrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. Immigrants who develop and maintain multiple relationships – familial, economic, social, organizational, religious and political – spanning borders are referred to as transmigrants. As migrants maintain contacts across
international borders, their identity is not necessarily connected to a single country. One implication is that migrants continuously negotiate identities between ‘old’ and ‘new’ worlds, creating new configurations of identification with home in both places. For example, until recently, Syrian food was hard to find in Toronto. Because of the recent influx of more than 50,000 Syrian refugees to Canada, including around 11,000 in Toronto, Syrian cuisine is becoming very popular there. The food spaces range from cafés to farmers’ markets or Syrian women sharing traditional recipes from home with the wider public. Toronto is a city whose culinary landscape is framed by its immigrant foods (more than half of all Torontians are foreign-born), and the emergence of Syrian cooking shows how food can build a bridge between two or more homelands (Sax, 2018).

**DO IT!**

Some people argue that cultural diversity in an immigrant-receiving country can pose a threat to the cultural uniqueness of that country and people. Interview a student with an immigrant background in your country and a student who was born and grew up in your country. Ask about their views on the benefits and threats that immigration may bring to the national culture of the country. Summarize their views and present your findings to the class.

**Attitudes towards multiculturalism**

In immigrant-receiving countries, tensions between ethnic and national cultures are constantly evident. At the same time as a country maximizes the benefits of cultural diversity, it is aware of the potential threats that the existence of different cultural practices might pose to the uniqueness
of the national culture. Immigrants everywhere form associations to maintain their ethnic cultural heritage and to promote the survival of their languages within mainstream institutions. On the other hand, people from the national culture express concerns about the threat that incoming immigrants pose to mainstream cultural values, the existing political and economic power structure, and the distribution of employment opportunities. For example, in both Germany and France, there is growing anxiety about the withdrawal of immigrant groups into their home cultures and their increasing unwillingness to integrate into the larger national culture. Situations like this raise the question of whether multiculturalism poses a threat to cultural identity.

Countries adopt different policies regarding diversity. The melting-pot ideal used to be the dominating discourse of immigrant identity in Australia and the United States. People with this ideal take the view that national identity should be a blend of all the cultures – a melting pot – so that differences between ‘us’ and ‘them’ are reduced in the hope that ‘we’ become more like ‘them’, and ‘they’ see us as less alien and more like them (Zubrzycki, 1997). Over time has come the realization that a multitude of ethnic cultures can coexist in a given environment, retaining their original heritage while functioning in the mainstream culture. This led to a change of perspective from the ‘melting pot’ to the ‘salad bowl’ to depict contemporary American society (Ogden, Ogden and Schau, 2004). Similarly, Canada has been described as a mosaic of cultural groups to reflect the distinguishable constituent parts of multiple cultures there. The survival of ethnicity has directed scholars’ attention towards understanding how immigrants integrate into the host society. When immigrants interact with people from the mainstream culture, they move not only between languages but also between cultures. Central to this culture-switching process is their relationships to the ingroup (their ethnic group) and outgroup (the mainstream cultural group). The settlement country’s attitudes to cultural diversity play an important role in influencing immigrants’ strategies to participate in the mainstream culture.

The concept of multiculturalism has been a subject of debate among the public and scholars. Multiculturalism stresses the importance of recognizing cultural diversity within a given social and political environment. However, the promotion of multicultural coexistence can lead to group distinctions and threaten social cohesion (Berry, 2001). Berry and Kalin (1995) argue that groups are more in favour of multiculturalism when they see advantages for themselves. The ideological asymmetry hypothesis (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999) suggests that hierarchy-attenuating ideologies such as multiculturalism appeal more to low-status groups than to high-status groups, because the existing status hierarchy tends to be more beneficial for members of high-rather than low-status groups. For minority and lower status groups, multiculturalism offers the possibility of maintaining their own culture and at the same time obtaining higher social status in society. Majority group members, on the other hand, may see ethnic minorities and their desire to maintain their own culture as a threat to mainstream cultural identity and their higher status position. Thus, multiculturalism has more to offer to majority than to minority groups.
The question is about the extent to which immigrants can maintain access to their ethnic language, religion, customs and traditions, and ethnic organizations without posing a threat to the overall political unity of the host society. Studies conducted with Asian immigrants in Australia showed that they tend to view multiculturalism as a greater benefit than do Anglo-Australians, who see it as more of a threat (Liu, 2007). The perceived threat to one’s own culture from another culture is one of the greatest stumbling blocks in intercultural relations (Bygnes, 2013). Such fears interfere with diplomatic relations, business cooperation and interpersonal relations between members of different cultures, and can even lead to wars between nations. The fears may also lead to prejudice by people in one culture against those in another. When people feel their cultural identity is threatened, they reject others.

The arrival of immigrants as new settlers also brings changes to the host cultural environment. As pointed out by Sayegh and Lasry (1993: 99), it is difficult ‘to imagine a host society which would not be transformed after immigrants have been accepted as full participants into the social and institutional networks of that society’. Thus, both the immigrant group and host nationals undergo psychological and sociocultural adjustment as a result of the presence of culturally distinctive others. Under some circumstances, psychological adjustment for members of the majority may be even more difficult than that experienced by immigrants. The reason is that immigrants, in many cases, are aware of the need to adjust to their host cultural environment as soon as, if not well before, they set foot in the host country. People in the mainstream cultural group, however, are not likely to be so well-prepared to accept or adjust to the changes in their lives brought about by the immigrant population. Hence, it is important to take into consideration both ethnic minorities and the majority group or groups, because the lack of accommodating attitudes in either group may hamper the realization of a positively diverse society.

**THEORY CORNER**

**INTEGRATED THREAT THEORY**

A significant amount of research indicates that the perception of threat plays an important role in prejudice towards outgroups in general and immigrants in particular. *Integrated threat theory*, advanced by Walter Stephan and colleagues (1999), identified four domains of threat: realistic,
symbolic, negative stereotypes and intergroup anxiety. Realistic threat concerns the threat to the political and economic power and well-being of the ingroup. Immigrants are likely to evoke such a threat, as they need jobs and may also require additional resources from the host society. Symbolic threat concerns group differences in values, beliefs, morals and attitudes, which may lead to prejudice against members of outgroups. Negative stereotypes serve as a basis for negative expectations concerning the behaviour of members of the stereotyped group. For example, when migrant group members are perceived to be untrustworthy, mainstream group members may feel threatened when interacting with them. The fourth type of threat, intergroup anxiety, refers to people’s feeling of being personally threatened in intergroup interactions because they are concerned about negative outcomes for themselves, such as being embarrassed, rejected or ridiculed. Interacting with immigrants is often difficult for people from the host culture because of differences in language and cultural values, and this adds to intergroup anxiety in interaction.

Following a number of terrorist attacks in the early twenty-first century, including the September 11 attacks in the United States, the 2002 nightclub bombings in Bali and the 2005 bombings in London, Muslims across the world have increasingly been perceived as a threat to security and targets for hostility. As an example of the application of the integrated threat theory, Stephen Croucher (2013: 50–51) studied the effects of growing Muslim populations in the UK, France and Germany, where Muslims are increasingly becoming ‘victims of prejudice and hate’. He applied the integrated threat theory to examine the relationship between host nationals’ perceptions of Muslims’ motivation to fit in the host culture and the level of perceived threat from them. The findings revealed that when members of the national culture feel a threat, either real or symbolic, they are more likely to believe that the immigrant group does not want to integrate. In addition, the economic and political context strongly affects the perceived level of threat from immigrants. Muslim immigrants were considered a higher threat, both symbolic and real, in the UK and France, where both unemployment and anti-Muslim rhetoric is high. People in Germany, on the other hand, saw Muslims as less of a threat.

REFERENCES


Immigration and Acculturation

DO IT!

Governments differ in the degree of cultural diversity they are ready to accept. Search the internet for the immigration policies of three countries from different regions of the world – for example, Europe, North America and Asia. Find out what the rules are for accepting immigrants and refugees, and the requirements for becoming a citizen of the country. Compare the similarities and differences. Share your findings with a classmate who has also looked at three different countries.

CULTURE SHOCK AND ACCULTURATION

Although the reasons for migration vary, all migrants undergo adjustment during cultural transition and face the same task of moving between their home culture and the mainstream culture of their new country. Immigrants’ ability to develop a sense of belonging in the new country, where they feel somewhat out of place (at least upon arrival), is crucial to their psychological well-being.

Culture shock and reverse culture shock

Culture shock refers to the feelings of disorientation and anxiety that a sojourner experiences due to his or her inability to adjust to a new cultural environment (Furnham and Bochner, 1982). It occurs in social interactions between sojourners and host nationals when familiar cultural norms and values governing behaviours are questioned in the new cultural environment. Adler (1975) notes that culture shock is a psychological and social process that progresses through several stages. For some people it may take several weeks to overcome psychological stress; for

PHOTO 9.2  A celebration of Buddha’s birthday in Brisbane.
Copyright © Shuang Liu. Used with permission.
Introducing Intercultural Communication

others the frustration of culture shock may last as long as a year. Symptoms of culture shock include depression, fatigue, helplessness, anxiety, homesickness, confusion, irritability, isolation, intolerance, defensiveness and withdrawal, and all are indicators of psychological stress.

The most widely known model of culture shock is the U-curve model, based on the work by Oberg (1960) and Lysgaard (1955) in relation to expatriate sojourners, whose reactions were characterized by increased levels of depression and anxiety related to doubt over how to live in a new cultural environment. The initial stage of culture shock, usually called the honeymoon stage, is characterized by the intense excitement associated with being somewhere different and unusual. The new arrival may feel euphoric and excited with all the new things he or she is encountering. The second stage is called disintegration, when frustration and stress begin to set in due to the differences experienced in the new culture. The new environment requires a great deal of conscious energy that was not required in the old environment, and this leads to cognitive overload and fatigue. Communication difficulties may occur. In this stage, feelings of discontent, impatience, anger, sadness and feelings of incompetence may appear. The third stage of culture shock is called the reorientation or adjustment phase, which involves the reintegration of new cues and an increased ability to function in the new culture. Immigrants start to seek solutions to their problems. A sense of psychological balance may be experienced, which initiates an evaluation of the old ways versus the new. The fourth stage of culture shock is labelled the adaptation stage. In this stage, people become more comfortable in the new culture as it becomes more predictable; they actively engage in the culture with their new problem-solving and conflict resolution tools, with some success. The final stage is described as biculturalism, where people are able to cope comfortably in both the home and new cultures. This stage is accompanied by a more solid feeling of belonging as people have recovered from the symptoms of culture shock.

Intercultural scholars have applied the concept of culture shock to understand the cross-cultural adjustment process in general. For instance, in a longitudinal study on the cross-cultural adaptation of 35 international students studying in New Zealand, Ward and her colleagues (1998) found that psychological and sociocultural problems were greatest at the beginning of a sojourn. Similarly, in a study of 500 Korean immigrants residing in the United States, Park and Rubin (2012) reported that longer residence was associated with better adaptation. The longer the sojourners stay in the new culture, the more likely they are to develop sociocultural and linguistic competence as they become more experienced in dealing with their new lives. In addition, a large body of culture shock research has been conducted in the multidisciplinary field of international management studies to inform expatriate selection and training as well as issues related to international relocation and repatriation (Kraimer, Bolino and Mead, 2016).

Culture shock can also be experienced by people who return to their home country after an extended stay in a foreign culture. Such an experience is referred to as reverse culture shock.
In early work, Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) extended the U-curve model to the W-curve model to account for reverse culture shock, which may cause greater distress and confusion than the original shock experienced in the new culture. In reverse culture shock, the home culture is compared adversely to the admired aspects of the new culture. Since people do not want to admit that they are having difficulty readjusting to the home culture, the re-entry process often involves suffering in silence. Upon first returning home, there is a sense of relief and excitement about being back in familiar surroundings, seeing old friends and family, and eating familiar food. However, to the surprise of everyone, especially the returning expatriate, a sense of depression and a negative outlook can follow the initial re-entry cycle. Several factors contribute to the downturn phase. First, upon re-entry to the home culture, there is a felt need to search for a new identity. Second, the home culture may look so negative at times that the re-entering person longs for the ‘good old days’ in the host country where she or he lived for the previous period. Third, the old values, beliefs and ways of thinking and living with which the person was once familiar may have changed, resulting in a sense of loss or ambiguity. Finally, people too may have changed over the intervening years; resuming deep friendships with old friends may not be automatic. For example, Chiang (2011) conducted a study on 25 young Taiwanese who emigrated to Canada and New Zealand with their parents as children in the 1980s and 1990s, but had returned to Taiwan. The findings showed that these returnees reported encountering reverse culture shock, and more than half of the participants expressed a desire to move back to the place to which they had emigrated.

The U-curve and other similar models have been criticized for oversimplifying the complex cross-cultural adjustment process and failing to reflect the range of factors at play. Scholars argue that cross-cultural adjustment should be seen as a multidimensional concept instead of a unitary, linear phenomenon, as suggested by classic models of culture shock. Fitzpatrick (2017) pointed out that culture shock should be viewed as a dynamic, discourse-based concept that is created through universal cultural processes but influenced by contextual factors, rather than as a set of the immutable characteristics of a given group of people based on cultural stereotypes. He further argues that culture shock is more about how individuals deal with the changes in their lives in a particular context as they engage in social behaviours and construct discourse around their behaviours and experiences. Research on culture shock, therefore, needs to seek to identify the possible causes of disorientation, stress and anxiety due to cultural transition, and to highlight the resources and strategies that can influence cross-cultural adjustment.

**DO IT!**

Talk to some international students at your university, some whose native language is English and others whose native language is not English. Ask them what kind of culture shock symptoms they experienced when they initially arrived in the country.
and started university, and whether they find speaking English helpful in overcoming culture shock. Write one paragraph about the role of language in culture shock, and share it with the classmates you have talked with to get their feedback.

Acculturation models and critiques

*Acculturation* refers to the changes that cultural groups undergo when ‘groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups’ (Redfield, Linton and Herskovits, 1936: 149). Acculturation is often marked by physical and psychological changes that occur as a result of the adaptation required to function in a new and different cultural context. The most widely applied model of acculturation was developed by John Berry (1980). According to his model, immigrants are confronted with two basic issues: maintenance of their heritage culture and maintenance of relationships with the host society. On this continuum, acculturation orientations include a positive value placed on both the heritage and the new culture (integration), a negative value placed on the old and a positive value placed on the new (assimilation), a positive value on the old and a negative value on the new (separation), and a negative value on both cultures (marginalization). For example, individuals who wish to maintain their ethnic traditions and at the same time to become an integral part of the host society are *integrationists*. *Marginalization* refers to individuals devaluing their cultural heritage but not having significant psychological contact with the host society either. Marginalized people may feel as though they do not belong anywhere or, in a more positive variant of this orientation, they may reject ethnic identity and host cultural identity. Bourhis, El-Geledi and Sachdev (2007) refer to such people as *individualists*. *Assimilation* and *separation* both refer to rejecting one culture and living exclusively in the other. Many immigrants move between these orientations and over time gravitate to one, most commonly integration or assimilation.

A plethora of studies have identified integration as the most preferred acculturation strategy (Ward, 2008), because it offers immigrants the opportunity to keep their ethnic cultural practice while maintaining a positive relationship with the host society. Integration probably benefits immigrants most, as among other advantages it provides them an opportunity to raise their social status. However, it is difficult, if not impossible, to upgrade the status position of their whole ethnic group. Efforts to achieve a positive social and cultural identity are therefore often focused on integrating into the mainstream cultural group, rather than remaining as a member of the foreign outgroup. Evidence from previous research also indicates that the integration strategy is linked to good psychological adjustment, a sense of belonging and a feeling of acceptance.

A shortcoming of Berry’s original model is that it places the emphasis in acculturation on minority or immigrant groups, based on the assumption that immigrants have the freedom
to pursue the acculturation strategy they prefer in the host society. In reality, host-culture attitudes can exert a strong influence on how immigrants experience the acculturation process (Kosic, Mannetti and Sam, 2005). Like immigrants, members of a host society also develop acculturation attitudes (Rohmann, Florack and Piontkowski, 2006). For them, acculturation centres on whether they want immigrants to maintain their heritage culture, and how much they value intergroup contact. Their acculturation attitudes, in a model analogous to Berry’s but referring to the host culture, are referred to as integration, assimilation, segregation and individualism (Bourhis et al., 1997). Discordance between majority and minority acculturation attitudes leads to negative outcomes, such as stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination (Zagefka and Brown, 2002). Moreover, most acculturation research is about change in minorities, rather than reciprocal change in people from the mainstream population. For example, Nguyen and Benet-Martínez (2013) found that 65 per cent of the studies included in their meta-analysis were about minorities in the United States, but not acculturative change in the dominant American population.

Other criticisms of Berry’s linear model are reflected in the call for examining acculturation at the level of the family, because acculturation is a process rather than a variable, and as such it is dynamic and multidimensional, extending beyond the static models (Tardif-Williams and Fisher, 2009). These scholars believe that in addition to the large body of scholarship on macro-level contexts of acculturation, such as cultural, socio-political and economic, there is a need for more longitudinal research that focuses on the day-to-day experiences in which cultural meanings are negotiated. Other attempts to address the limitations of the linear acculturation models are reflected in adding more complexity to the model.

**THEORY CORNER**

**BICULTURAL IDENTITY INTEGRATION**

Many people are now exposed to more than one culture and become bicultural or multicultural. These bicultural/bilingual individuals may be international students, expatriates, business people, immigrants, refugees, foreign-born migrants or children of interracial marriages. As a result, biculturalism and bilingualism have been attracting increasing attention in research in the field of cross-cultural psychology and intercultural communication. One influential theoretical concept in this field was *bicultural identity integration* (BII), developed by Benet-Martínez and colleagues.
(Continued)

Bicultural individuals differ in how they combine and negotiate their two cultures. Benet-Martínez and Haritatos (2005) conducted a study using a sample of Chinese-American biculturals to unpack the construct of BII; that is, the degree to which a bicultural individual perceives his or her two cultural identities as ‘compatible’ versus ‘oppositional’. The BII measure has two components: distance (versus overlap) and conflict (versus harmony) between one’s two cultural identities or orientations. High BII people identify with both heritage and mainstream cultures, see them as compatible and complementary, see themselves as part of a combined, blended cultural being (e.g., ‘I keep the Chinese and American cultures together), and feel good about all this. Low BII people also identify with both cultures, but they are more likely to feel caught between the two cultures, and prefer to keep them separate (e.g., ‘I feel conflicted between the Chinese and American ways of doing things’).

Bicultural individuals engage in a process called cultural frame switching, where they shift between their two cultural interpretative frames in response to cues in the social environment. However, although extensive research has investigated the differences between cultural groups, relatively less is known about cultural switching processes within multicultural or bicultural individuals. For example, how do bicultural individuals organize and move between their various cultural orientations without feeling disoriented? Cheng, Lee and Benet-Martínez (2006) conducted a study to examine how cultural priming affects the cultural frame switching of individuals with high and low levels of bicultural identity integration, using a sample of 179 first-generation and 41 second-generation Asian-American biculturals. They used an implicit word-priming task that included one of four types of words: (a) positive words associated with Asians, (b) negative words associated with Asians, (c) positive words associated with Americans or (d) negative words associated with Americans. The findings indicated that when exposed to positive cultural cues, biculturals who perceived their cultural identities as compatible (high BII) responded in culturally congruent ways, whereas biculturals who perceived their cultural identities as conflicting (low BII) responded in culturally incongruent ways. The opposite was true for negative cultural cues. These results confirmed that the cultural frame-switching process is different depending on one’s level of BII, and that both high and low BIIs can exhibit culturally congruent or incongruent behaviours under different conditions.

REFERENCES


STRATEGIES OF CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION

*Cross-cultural adaptation* refers to the process of increasing one’s level of fitness in a new cultural environment (Kim, 1988). A number of factors influence the level of anxiety, distress and frustration experienced by sojourners or new immigrants, hence appropriate communication strategies are needed to facilitate cross-cultural adaptation.

Factors influencing cross-cultural adaptation

*Similarity between host and home cultures.* The degree of similarity between the host and home cultures of immigrants can predict the acculturation stress experienced by them. For example, Sudanese immigrants in Australia experience significantly larger psychological and cultural distance compared to those from New Zealand. In addition to physical appearance and language, cultural traits such as beliefs and values may also set one group of immigrants apart from others. The early Chinese settlers in Australia in the 1840s were resented because they were efficient, hardworking and economically competitive, and were therefore viewed as a threat to the livelihoods of European migrants (Ang, 2000). Increasing cultural distance encourages immigrants to remain psychologically located within their ethnic groups.

*Ethnic support.* Immigrants extend their connection to their home culture through various types of ethnic associations, including religious groups. Ethnic community networks also provide valuable support for immigrants in adjusting to the new culture. For example, a number of studies have identified social networks as a critical part of the entrepreneurial activities of immigrants in many countries. When immigrants relocate from the home country, they bring with them significant attachments to their home culture. They also extend this attachment in the host country by connecting to ethnic social networks, which provide an initial cushion for negotiating a sense of safety.

PHOTO 9.3 Halloween, an American festival, is celebrated in Hong Kong. Copyright © Annie Liu. Used with permission.
place, as evidenced in ethnic residential concentration in certain areas. Ethnic social support can therefore create a space where immigrants can bridge cultural distance and gradually build connections with the mainstream culture.

**Personal characteristics and background.** Demographic factors such as age, native language and education, personal experience such as previous exposure to other cultures, and personality characteristics such as extraversion may all influence cross-cultural adaptation outcomes. Younger migrants generally adapt more easily than older ones, particularly when they are also well educated. However, there are studies that have not found age to be a significant predictor of acculturation outcomes (Park and Rubin, 2012). Scholars argue that the lack of host language proficiency is one of the main barriers that sojourners face during cross-cultural adaptation (Berry, 2005). Previous exposure to other cultures also better prepares a person psychologically to deal with the stress and frustration associated with settling in a new culture.

**Mainstream media.** When mass media portray an ethnic group, the image they create about that ethnic group becomes a common category that others may use to describe the group members. Because of this effect, mass media can serve as a contributor to perpetuating or diminishing stereotypes of certain minority groups (Mastro and Greenberg, 2000). This role of the mass media in activating and perpetuating stereotypes is particularly significant when the audience either has little direct experience with the group or lacks other sources of verification. For example, the negative media representation of Muslims contributes to hostile attitudes towards this group in many countries. When negative stereotypes are perceived to be real, prejudice is a likely outcome. An ethnic group’s perception of how they are portrayed in the mass media will affect their attitudes to the mainstream culture and subsequently their desire to integrate.

**Ethnic media.** In addition to exposure to mainstream media, ethnic minorities also have access to ethnic media such as newspapers and TV programmes in their native language, accessible in their host country. Ethnic media have both intragroup and intergroup functions. As an intragroup function, ethnic media promote ethnic group cohesion not only through their news stories, but also via the ethnic language they use. As an intergroup function, ethnic media can help immigrants to learn about the host culture through their familiar language. Past studies have found that ethnic minorities, especially during the early stages in the new culture, may avoid interpersonal encounters when they can instead use mediated channels such as newspapers in their native language as alternative sources of learning about the new cultural environment and people. Ethnic media, therefore, can play a positive role in facilitating immigrants’ cross-cultural adaptation.

**Intergroup contact.** The amount of interpersonal contact between immigrants and host nationals can influence the process of cross-cultural adaptation. Contact between groups has long been considered to be an important strategy for improving intergroup relations.
Pettigrew (1997) examined the responses of over 3,800 majority group members from France, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Germany, and found that intergroup contact played a critical role in reducing bias. Appropriate and friendly intergroup contact may translate into more positive perceptions and may also strengthen ingroup identification by creating positive feelings about it. Potentially negative stereotypes created by the mass media may also be reduced by more frequent intergroup contact. Intergroup contact or intercultural friendships can facilitate immigrants’ cross-cultural adaptation.

**Political and social environments.** The host culture’s political and social environment has a major impact on adjustment to new cultural surroundings. Specific outgroups are more (or less) welcome in a culture. Negative attitudes towards immigrants can indicate rejection of a minority group and can establish impermeable social boundaries (Bourhis et al., 1997). Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti (2000) compared experiences of discrimination on psychological distress among a large sample of 1,146 immigrants representing seven ethnic groups (Russian, Ingrian/Finnish, Estonians, Somalis, Arabs, Vietnamese and Turks) in Finland. They found that, across the sample, self-reported experiences of discrimination were highly predictive of psychological well-being. Factors affecting the degree of tolerance of particular outgroups include the social or political policies of the mainstream culture, such as political representation, citizenship criteria, language requirements and employment opportunities.

---

**THEORY CORNER**

**THE INTEGRATED THEORY OF COMMUNICATION AND CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION**

A widely applied model of cross-cultural adaptation from the field of intercultural communication is Young Y. Kim’s integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation. Kim (2001: 31) explains that cross-cultural adaptation is interactive and fundamentally communicative; it is ‘the dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to new, unfamiliar or changed cultural environments, establish (or re-establish) and maintain relatively stable, reciprocal and functional relationships with those environments’. According to this model, adaptation is a progressive series of positive and negative experiences, rather than a smooth, continuous process. This process can be pictured as a coiled spring, which stretches and grows but is pulled back by its own tension. In the initial phase of cross-cultural adaptation, migrants may experience ‘draw-back’ as they
undergo stress in their interactions with the mainstream culture. As they grow more accustomed and comfortable with the mainstream culture, they experience a 'leap forward'. This process is explained as a stress, adaptation and growth dynamic that is a continual, cyclical process of cultural learning and intercultural transformation achieved through communication. Interaction may be interpersonal (e.g., interacting with particular individuals in the host culture) or mass-mediated (e.g., reading or watching or listening to mass media, which may afford a less risky form of interaction for immigrants), but it is always communicative.

In respect of how the process of acculturation unfolds over time, the integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation suggests that change over time takes place as a result of the challenges experienced in the host environment. These challenges cause stress, which in turn evokes adaptive change through learning and internal reorganization. The 'growth' referred to in the stress, adaptation and growth dynamic is the development of a more effective functionality in the new environment, referred to as functional fitness; also known as sociocultural adaptation. This model adds to Berry’s models in that it highlights how individual predispositions (preparedness for change, ethnic proximity and adaptive personality) and the mainstream cultural environment (receptivity, conformity pressure and ethnic group strength) influence and are influenced by communication (communication competence, interpersonal communication with host members and access to ethnic interpersonal and mass communication), which in turn affects sojourner adaptation.

**REFERENCE**


**Communication strategies to facilitate cross-cultural adaptation**

Immigration invariably means having to live in more than one culture. Consequently, people engage in communication with three types of audience: members of the mainstream culture, people from the home country, and their children who have grown up in the new culture. First, migrants have to learn how to communicate with members of the mainstream culture. This involves learning about a new culture and the practices and discourses of this host culture. Consistent research shows that integration is most preferred by migrants and host nationals, although sometimes an individual can adopt more than one strategy depending on
the situational requirements. Second, migrants do not completely separate themselves from the home culture. Engaging with the home culture can take the form of remaining part of it by keeping in regular contact with people from the home country. Some immigrants, for example Vietnamese refugees who arrived in Australia in the 1970s, may lose touch with the old country due to the prevailing conditions there. If this happens, they will eventually only have a historical understanding of the ‘home’ country. Third, migrants have to learn to ‘translate’ between their old culture and their children’s hybridized culture. Learning to cope with their children’s hybrid culture is part of the daily routine of older generations of immigrants.

These myriad relationships require immigrants to adopt strategies to integrate into the settlement country. Successful cross-cultural adaptation is related not only to the psychological and social well-being of the immigrants, but also to their economic survival. Part of the process of acculturation is learning survival skills, including how to use banking services, where to go shopping, when to eat, how to work and rest, and how to use public transport. Building intercultural friendships can be helpful as it not only gives immigrants local guidance, but also increases the opportunity for intergroup contact, hence promoting intercultural understanding. It is not uncommon to find many migrants remaining within a network of their own ethnic group, not being aware that the best way to become acquainted with another culture is to establish relationships with members of that culture. Further, cross-cultural adaptation also requires immigrants to learn to accept differences.

As intercultural communicators, we should try to understand and interpret the things we experience as they are within a particular cultural context, rather than using our own cultural norms as the only judgement criteria. Regardless of how well we have prepared ourselves before entering a new culture, there will always be moments when we experience culture shock, encounter difficulties or feel frustrated at our own incapacity to accomplish our goals. Therefore, a positive attitude towards the new culture is something migrants should carry with them throughout the cross-cultural adaptation process.

**SUMMARY**

- The cultural diversity that migrants bring to the settlement country creates challenges for both immigrants and host nationals. Not only the migrant group but also the host nationals need to undergo psychological and sociological adjustment.
- Immigration is no longer a one-way journey. Many immigrants today build social networks across geographic, cultural and political borders, thus engaging in the process of transmigration.
All people moving to a new culture experience culture shock, the process of which can be divided into several stages. Returning migrants may experience reverse culture shock, too.

Orientations to heritage and host cultures can result in four acculturation orientations (or variations of them): assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization. The outcomes of acculturation can be influenced by a range of personal, social, cultural and environmental factors.

People move to other cultures for different reasons, including joining family, for further study, or in search of humanitarian protection or employment opportunities. For example, almost 1.5 million migrants over the age of 15 have settled in Australia since 2000. As the global number of migrants increases, the debate over the maintenance of heritage cultures remains at the forefront. A ‘melting pot’ versus a ‘salad bowl’ is a commonly used metaphor when discussing managing diversity in multicultural societies. While we enjoy the benefits of cultural diversity and encourage migrants to keep their heritage and cultural traditions and practices (particularly their language and customs) so that they can pass these on to future generations, we also hope that the endorsement of diversity will not create a threat to the uniqueness of our own culture. The question is: To what extent should we encourage migrants to maintain their heritage and cultural practices without creating a threat to the unity of the mainstream culture? What difference does context (e.g., public versus private) make? What other factors make a difference, and what difference do they make?

Refugees constitute a special category of migrants. According to the UNHCR, a refugee is someone who has been forced to leave his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. As such, a refugee has a justified fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. The term 'asylum seeker' is often used interchangeably with 'refugee', but it refers to something different under law. An asylum seeker is a person who has sought protection as a refugee, but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been assessed. Under international law, a person is a ‘refugee’ as soon as he or she meets the definition of refugee, whether or not the claim has been assessed.
In 2015, more than a million refugees and asylum seekers came into Europe, mostly from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. The movement of people had been mainly driven by violent conflicts in the Middle East and Africa. Refugees were fleeing wars, persecution and unrelenting poverty. The majority crossed the Mediterranean Sea by boat, but some of them made their way overland via Turkey and the Balkans. Many reports pointed to the tremendously difficult and dangerous journey (Taub, 2016). For example, refugees on their way to Europe had to deal with circumstances such as newly erected fences, walls and border restrictions. The Libya to Italy crossing continues to be exceptionally dangerous, and the route has claimed the lives of 1 in every 92 persons who have tried to cross illegally, according to data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2006). Since 2014, an average of 3,500 people have died each year trying to make the journey to Italy from North Africa (Campbell, 2017). The boats are overcrowded and become unseaworthy. Most of the boats sink just 20 to 40 miles from the Libyan coast.

The influx of such a large number of refugees in recent years has created a huge challenge to European social structures, as European countries have struggled to cope with the new challenges in the shorter term (e.g., how to organize emergency campsites for refugees) and in the longer term (e.g., how to help refugees to integrate, learn a new language and navigate through the education system for their children). The huge numbers of refugees and the issues related to their integration into host societies also poses difficulties. What happens depends on how well prepared local communities are for accommodating the newcomers. On the other hand, many refugees have undergone severe trauma and suffer from distress, anxiety or mental illness after their arrival in the destination country. The loss of social networks, separation from family members, a lack of language proficiency of the settlement country, fear of repatriation, and the unstable political environment in the home country, among other factors, all play a role in perpetuating psychiatric symptoms, particularly depression.

The arrival of refugees also creates economic challenges for the receiving countries. In Europe, there are hot debates about who can and should accept refugees, because of the disproportionate burden faced by some countries, particularly the destination countries (Greece and Italy) where the majority of migrants have been arriving. In 2015, Germany suggested that all EU states should accept mandatory quotas to spread the refugees EU-wide. France, Italy and Greece supported Germany’s suggestion, but EU leaders as a whole
decided on a voluntary scheme. Great Britain, however, argued that refugees should claim asylum when they reached their first safe destination. There also continues to be a division within the EU countries over how best to help with resettlement. Germany, for example, has been welcoming to refugees and asylum seekers. German Chancellor Angela Merkel pledged to Syrians that if they could manage to reach Germany, they could apply for asylum seeker status there. She stressed the need to fulfil Germany’s international humanitarian duty. According to the *New York Times* (28 April 2017), the German government spent €14.5 billion (approximately US$15 billion) on refugees in 2016. About $1.5 billion of expenditures went to different reception centres and was spent on housing and government-provided food or stipends, and $2.2 billion went towards the provision of education and training, such as courses on intercultural communication that are being offered around Germany. These courses in particular address concerns over integration (or the lack of it), particularly in the large German cities. Refugees in Germany are required to take roughly 700 hours of classes in the German language and culture. When they pass a language test, they are eligible to get a job and stay in the country permanently.

Similarly, Sweden has received large numbers of refugees. At the peak of the European migrant crisis in 2015, more than 160,000 people arrived in Sweden seeking asylum; this is a high number of refugees to accommodate for a country with a population of fewer than 10 million. Sweden particularly invested in accepting refugees. The government itself, along with citizens’ groups that are a part of a strong civil society, is extremely active in reaching out to newcomers. For example, the Department of Invitations is a creative programme where Swedes and new arrivals are ‘matched’ and have dinner together at the host’s home. It aims to connect fluent Swedish speakers to refugees who want to improve their language skills while sharing a home-cooked meal.

According to *European Parliament News*, a dialogue was held between the Commission and the different organizations that have been working at the local level in the area of culture to discuss the role of culture in promoting the inclusion of refugees. They agreed that there is an urgent need to find strategies that will allow large numbers of refugees fleeing conflict and war zones to be included in European societies while preserving their cultural roots. Different proposals focus on culture as a factor in helping refugees to recover from trauma, develop communication skills and feel empowered. Proposals are also being put forward for conflict resolution and prevention, and mutual understanding.


1. What factors can influence migration flow and what effects can immigration have on receiving countries?

2. What factors can influence a change in immigration policy in countries receiving refugees and asylum seekers?

3. When refugees enter a new country they often feel ‘out of place.’ What roles could intercultural communication play in helping them to integrate into the host country?

4. Do you view Europe as a ‘Liberal Europe,’ committed to moral humanitarianism, or do you see Europe as a ‘Fortress Europe,’ committed to expelling refugees and asylum seekers? Why?

5. The refugee issue has shaped the political discourse in Europe. Can you think of any examples in other countries or regions where recent flows of refugees have triggered public debates?


Preferred emigration destinations among adolescents reflect the images and stereotypes of countries that continuously emerge in a multitude of local and global discourses and from concrete experiences with other countries. This study found that, if they wish to leave Iceland, female adolescents are more likely to move to other Nordic countries, particularly Denmark. Male adolescents, however, preferred English-speaking countries that have a reputation for economic or military power, such as the United States or the UK.

Multiculturalism is a fiercely debated subject, and this article argues that ambivalence is a central feature of people's perspectives on societal diversity. Focusing on interviews with the leaders of three Norwegian social movement organizations, the study found that despite the leaders' very different organizational and political vantage points, they share a common ambivalence towards multiculturalism. This study provides an important supplement to analyses aimed at classifying specific political preferences on multiculturalism.


This article discusses the potential issues arising when intercultural couples raise children. Twenty-one participants were interviewed regarding their parenting experiences as part of an intercultural couple. The study identified the diverse strategies that were used by intercultural parents to negotiate diversity. These strategies of adaptation included assimilation, cultural tourism, cultural transition, cultural amalgamation and dual biculturalism.


This paper aims to examine culture shock in international management studies and cross-cultural research. It argues that the use of the concept is based on a flawed understanding of culture and proposes an alternative perspective to help organizations prepare their employees for overseas assignments. The paper claims that culture shock is not about culture, but rather about the dynamics of context and how sojourners deal with life changes in cross-cultural adjustment.


This paper provides theoretical arguments for a transformative theory of biculturalism that aims to unify existing research on bicultural individuals’ experiences. The paper reviews the existing literature on acculturation and links specific identity negotiation processes to unique products within the basic psychological domains of self, motivation and cognition. The authors argue
that the way bicultural individuals negotiate their cultures and identities may result in unique psychological and social products that go beyond the additive contributions of each culture, justifying the need for a new transformative theory of biculturalism.

In this video Professor Tina Harris talks about her work in interracial communication. The video will help you to achieve the learning objective of identifying communication strategies to facilitate cultural adjustment. Watch it to see how Professor Harris distinguishes interracial communication from intercultural communication.

This video is available at http://study.sagepub.com/liu3e