

# 1 Introduction

David L. Sam & John W. Berry

## 1.1 The scope of acculturation

Contact between peoples of different cultures is not a new phenomenon. Throughout human history, mankind has traveled around the world for various reasons, either in search of greener pastures, fleeing from persecution and catastrophe, to trade or to conquer and colonize, or in search of adventure or fun. These activities have resulted in the meeting of peoples of diverse backgrounds. This process has led to changes in the original patterns of life and cultures of the peoples concerned, as well as to the formation of new societies. The meeting of cultures and the resulting changes are what collectively has come to be known as *acculturation*.

Although acculturation is as old as recorded history, and the field indeed engaged the minds of ancient philosophers, it was not until the last few decades that we saw a major surge in research interest in the topic in psychology. However, in the field of anthropology, the interest in acculturation developed earlier, with research carried out with indigenous peoples (e.g., Hallowell, 1955), and in sociology with immigrants (e.g., Park, 1928). In psychology, books and articles reviewing and integrating the literature on acculturation began appearing in the 1980s and 1990s (e.g., Berry, 1980, 1990; Padilla, 1980), and have continued up to the present (e.g., Chun, Balls-Organista & Marin, 2003). Rudmin (2003) has tracked this trend in psychology, noting a rapid increase in publications from less than 100 in the 1940s, to over 500 in the 1980s and over 1,500 most recently.

We attribute this increased interest in the field of acculturation to several reasons, but they all boil down to two main issues: (i) the increase in worldwide migration, due to natural and man-made disasters such as war, conflict, poverty and famine, as well as to improved means of traveling over larger distances; and (ii) the increasing importance of understanding the link between culture and human behavior that has been advanced by those working in the field of cross-cultural psychology.

## 1.2 Worldwide traveling and migration

The increase in the global population and the widening in socio-economic differences between low- and high-income countries have acted

as “push” factors in sending people from less economically developed regions of the world to the more developed parts in a search for a better livelihood. Concomitantly, urbanization in many countries has led to internal movement of people from rural areas into urban areas. Several regions of the world have witnessed an increase in political, ethnic and religious conflicts that have culminated in collective violence. In its aftermath, there has been a surge in the numbers of people seeking asylum and becoming refugees in other countries. These activities have all contributed to an increase in worldwide migration (Desjarlais, Eisenberg, Good & Kleinman, 1995).

At the start of this century, it was estimated that there were about 175 million people living in countries different from the one in which they were born – a group that is collectively referred to as “migrants” (United Nations, 2002). This number is a doubling in just a quarter of a century. Most of these 175 million migrants are undergoing changes of some sort in their original ways of living, largely because they originate from societies that are culturally different from the one they currently reside in. What are not included in this statistic showing a large number of migrants are the millions of children of these migrants who were born in the country where their parents currently reside. Indeed immigrant children have been identified as one of the fastest-growing sectors of the population in several Western societies (Aronowitz, 1984). For instance, it was estimated that, while the number of immigrant children in the United States grew by 47 percent in the period between 1990 and 1997, the percentage increase in children of native-born parents was only 7 percent during the same period (Hernandez, 1999).

There is hardly any country that is presently not affected by migration in one way or another, either as a sender or as receiver. There are both positive and negative aspects to these migrations. For sending countries, one of their concerns is brain-drain, but, on the positive side, monetary remittances from abroad serve to support their families and bolster their domestic economies. For the receiving countries, they may be concerned with ethnic conflicts and social problems, on the negative side. However, on the positive side, immigrants contribute to their demographic base during times of population decline, as well as to economic development. In spite of the fact that the one major motivating factor in migration is to improve one’s personal, social and economic situation, most migrants face several challenges as they traverse two or more cultures. All in all, it is not surprising that migration is not simply a personal issue, but one that attracts vested political interests with important global implications.

Since 1975, the number of international travelers has been rising steadily from 222 million, reaching 500 million in 1993. Projections made by the World Tourism Organization suggest that this figure will increase by an average of 3.6 percent annually until 2010, to a total of 940 million (see Chapter 12). Much international traveling is short-term and is for a specific purpose, such as tourism. Nevertheless, it leads to a meeting between peoples of different backgrounds and in the process leads to changes in the original cultural patterns

of the groups concerned. In addition to tourism, international education has also been on the rise since the end of the Second World War. Open Doors (1996/1997) estimates that there may be up to 1 million people studying in countries other than their own each year. One rationale behind the promotion of international education is the idea of international students serving as cultural carriers (Klineberg, 1970). One consequence of international education is the experience of acculturation, for both the student and the receiving institutions.

Worldwide, there are about 350 million people who are considered to be indigenous; these can be classified into at least 5,000 cultural groups ranging from the Inuit and Sami in the Arctic to Maori in New Zealand and Biaka in Africa. Many indigenous people live in remote areas, and although some have willingly come into contact with other cultures as part of programs of national development, others have been colonized, encroached upon and annexed against their will. In this latter group are people who have been forced to live together with, and dominated by, cultures different from their original one, and subsequently to experience acculturation

### 1.3 Culture and human behavior

In the 1960s, many psychologists became concerned about the cultural bias that was inherent in their discipline. Most theories, data and researchers were rooted in a small cultural corner of the world, while most of the world's peoples were being ignored. Even worse, when other cultural groups became part of the research enterprise of psychology, they were studied using concepts and instruments that were alien and culturally inappropriate. Missing were points of view that matched the cultural realities of these other populations, including meanings and procedures that could allow psychologists to understand people *in their own terms*.

To deal with these problems, a field of psychology developed which became known as *cross-cultural psychology* (for an overview of these trends, see Berry, Poortinga, Segall & Dasen, 2002; Berry *et al.*, 1997; Segall, 1979; Triandis *et al.*, 1980). For this field, the primary question was *how does culture influence human behavior?* The focus was on how the cultural context in which a person develops might shape (either promote or constrain) behavior. Substantial information is now available to answer this question. The field has clearly demonstrated that cultural experiences do indeed shape the development of behavior and its display in daily life. The field has also developed theories, research methods and domains of application that have radically transformed the way psychology views human diversity.

Some psychologists working in this field came to be interested in a parallel question: "how do people born and raised in one society manage to live in another society that is culturally different from the one they are used to?" This is the basic acculturation question, and is the focus of this *Handbook*. It is rooted

in the finding of cross-cultural psychology that people develop behaviors that are adapted to living successfully in their own sociocultural contexts. If this is the case, what happens to people when they take their behavioral repertoire to a different cultural context? We can imagine a number of possible answers to this question. One is that their behavior remains unchanged, and they may risk becoming maladapted to their new setting. Another is that their behavior changes rather easily and rapidly as they learn to live well in their new setting. And a third is that there is a complex pattern of both behavioral continuity and change as people negotiate how to live in their new society. This complexity involves many psychological processes, including social learning, stress and coping, identity, resilience, mental illness, conflict and many others. It is this very complexity that has spurred the development of this field of acculturation psychology, and the production of this *Handbook*.

#### **1.4 Contemporary research in psychology of acculturation**

Research in the psychology of acculturation now abounds and there is no lack of studies listed on the PsyINFO web-site and in dissertation abstracts. The references at the end of each chapter in this volume are a testimony to how fast the field is growing. Many of these studies have been reported not only in general psychological journals but also in cross-cultural and multidisciplinary journals. The titles of the journals are unending, and for that reason we will not make any effort to list them.

Another important outlet for psychological acculturation research is at international conferences. Many conference presentations are naturally further developed for journal papers and conference proceedings, and therefore may be included in the list of references in this *Handbook*. However, several important and powerful presentations are not developed further and get lost in the system. A list of conferences where acculturation studies abound may therefore be appropriate, but here again there can be no end; mention can, however, be made of the predominant international psychological associations whose conferences are often dominated by acculturation studies. These are the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP), and the International Academy of Intercultural Research (IAIR). As an example of how acculturation studies dominate several of these conferences, more than 1 out of 5 papers of the nearly 200 presentations at the joint conference between IACCP and ARIC (Association pour la Recherche Interculturelle – a Francophone organization similar to IACCP) in 1994 was on acculturation (see Bouvy, van de Vijver, Boski & Schmitz, 1994).

Furthermore, there have been a number of specialized conferences on acculturation over the last couple of decades, two of which might be mentioned here. The first (Padilla, 1980) drew together psychologists who had made early contributions to conceptualizing acculturation, and who had made empirical

contributions to the field. The second (Chun, Balls-Organista & Marin, 2003) was an explicit attempt to replicate and update the earlier conference. Both of these conferences have resulted in very well cited books on acculturation. Unfortunately both books were mainly focused on acculturation research done in only one country (the United States), and are sometimes of less relevance to acculturation taking place in the wider world. This is the same issue of limited cultural coverage that the field of cross-cultural psychology has attempted to deal with.

Although the list of book chapters on acculturation studies is unlimited, with few exceptions (e.g., Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001) textbooks entirely devoted to the psychology of acculturation are rare. This general lack of books on the psychology of acculturation in its entirety, coupled with the overwhelming dominance of US acculturation studies, has been one of the motivating factors behind the development of this *Handbook*. Our intention was to organize a book that covers a very broad range of topics within acculturation, as well as to draw on scholars from different parts of the world.

However, we do acknowledge that most of the topics addressed in this *Handbook* are of concern to the more economically developed societies. It is obvious that most acculturation is taking place in Africa, Asia and South America, but there is limited coverage of these phenomena to be found here. This restriction in coverage is partly due to the limited availability of researchers and research funding for work in these other areas. However, we have attempted to include references to such work where it is available. We also acknowledge that the list of authors is largely dominated by scholars working in Europe; this is partly because acculturation as a research topic has a shorter history in Europe compared with the settler societies in North America and the South Pacific, and we wanted to highlight this emerging literature from Europe.

In spite of the abundance of acculturation research, one area of research that is largely lacking is comparative studies that cover more than a few countries. Many of the studies cited focus on a single society and at best a few ethnic groups, making it very difficult to achieve any generalizations about acculturation phenomena (Berry, Kim, Minde & Mok, 1987). The editing of this *Handbook* coincides with the publication of a large-scale cross-national study on young immigrants' psychological acculturation. This is the International Comparative Study of Ethnocultural Youth (ICSEY) project. Several of the chapters in this *Handbook* refer to some of the findings accruing from the ICSEY project (see Berry, Phinney, Sam & Vedder, 2006).

In order to cover a broad range of issues relevant to psychological acculturation, the book is organized in four parts. The first part provides an overview of the main theories and concepts within the field of acculturation, together with a presentation of issues pertaining to research design, methodology and measurement. The second part includes chapters that present some research findings, both general and specific, on the various kinds of acculturating groups that are found in plural societies. Part III reviews research findings from a variety

of societies of settlement, where much of the research work on acculturation has been taking place. The fourth and final part is concerned with applications, drawing upon both theory and empirical findings to address issues of work, school, society and health that may arise in plural societies as a result of acculturation.

The chapters in each part will be previewed in a Part Introduction. There, readers will find sufficient information to allow them to locate the kinds of material that meet their main interests. In addition, at the end of the volume, a Subject Index is provided that gives more detailed access to key concepts and findings.

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Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-84924-1 - The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology

Edited by David L. Sam and John W. Berry

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## PART I

# Theories, concepts and methods

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While acculturation research originated in the field of anthropology, and was further developed by sociology, this *Handbook* mainly examines the newer research tradition developed by psychologists. This first part portrays some of these earlier roots in the social sciences, and then focuses on some perspectives that derive mainly from psychological concepts and research interests. In particular, three general traditions, referred to as the *stress*, *culture learning* and *identity* perspectives, are presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 respectively, to set the stage for much of the discussion that follows in the *Handbook*. These three general orientations to the field are followed by two chapters that link acculturation phenomena to two basic psychological concepts: *development* (Chapter 7) and *personality* (Chapter 8). The part closes with two chapters that draw our attention to some methodological features of acculturation research. While the field of acculturation psychology shares most of the problems and solutions that are present in cross-cultural psychology, there are some unique features to acculturation research design, assessment and analyses that are addressed here.

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