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Acculturation

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Acculturation is an experience/ phenomenon that occurs when groups of individuals with different cultural backgrounds engage in on going/ continuous physical contact, which in turn causes one or more of the different cultures too experience adaptation/ a change in their original cultural practices (Berry, 1997); (Berry, 2008). Acculturation is a phenomenon that occurs at a macro level/ group level and a micro level/ individual level, and this means that an individual of a certain ethnic minority group can experience acculturation differently than their ethnic minority group (Berry, 1997). Macro level acculturation occurs when the original culture of a specific ethnic minority group undergoes a change in cultural practices, due to on going physical contact with a different culture (Berry, 1997). Micro level acculturation is known as psychological acculturation, which refers to a psychological change that a single individual experiences due to the acculturation phenomenon (Berry, 1997); (Berry, 2008). This literature view will initiate by discussing four important concepts associated with the acculturation theory, then this review will present pan-cultural research evidence in order to illustrate the four acculturation concepts, with that, explanations identifying how the acculturation theory helps us comprehend pan- cultural ethnic differences and similarities will be highlighted, and next the potential weaknesses of the acculturation theory will be presented. In close this literature review will summarize how the acculturation theory impacts the ABC's of psychology, namely affect, behaviour, and cognition.

The four major concepts/ strategies of acculturation are assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization (Berry, 1997); (Jasinskaja-Lanti & Liebkind, 2009). Assimilation is experienced when individuals of a minority group decide that they no longer want to safe guard their original cultural value system, as they only want to absorb the mainstream/ dominate cultural value system (Berry, 1997); (Haasen, Demiralay & Reimer,

2008); (Mussap, 2009); (Barrette, Bourhis, Personnaz, & Personnaz, 2004). Separation is experienced when individuals of a minority group decide that they do not want to jeopardize their original cultural value system, and as a result they prevent themselves from absorbing mainstream cultural values (Berry, 1997); (Haasen et al., 2008); (Mussap, 2009) (Barrette et al., 2004). Integration is experienced when individuals of a minority group decide that they want to hold onto their native cultural values, as well as the cultural values held by mainstream society (Berry, 1997); (Haasen et al., 2008); (Mussap, 2009). Marginalization is experienced when individuals of an ethnic minority group decide that they do not want to maintain their original cultural values, and they do not want to adopt the cultural value system held by mainstream society (Berry, 1997); (Haasen et al., 2008); (Mussap, 2009). In order to determine what acculturation strategy is more likely to be adopted and experienced, two questions that are fundamental to Berry's acculturation theory need to be answered. The first questions identifies weather or not an ethnic minority actually desires/ feels its important to maintain their native cultural value system (Berry, 1997); (Jasinskaja-Lanti & Liebkind, 2009). The second question identifies weather or not an ethnic minority actually desires/ feels its important to have contact and social relations with mainstream members (Berry, 1997); (Jasinskaja-Lanti & Liebkind, 2009). Minority individuals answering "yes" to both questions are on their way to experiencing integration, those answering "no" to both questions are on their way to experiencing marginalization, those answering "yes" to question one and "no" to question two are more likely to experience separation, and those answering "no" to question one and "yes" to question two are more likely to experience assimilation (Berry, 1997).

The assimilation experience is more common among minority groups living in a nation that is categorized as a melting pot, such as the United States (Berry, 2008), as these types of nations strongly influence minorities to drop their native cultural values and adopt the mainstream cultural value system (Bhattacharya & Groznik, 2008). The separation experience is more common among ethnic minorities residing in segregationist type nations (Berry, 2008), which refer to nations that implement social policy that excludes ethnic minority groups (Berry. 1997); (Barrette et al., 2004). The integration experience is more common among minority groups residing in multicultural nations such as Canada (Berry, 2008), as these types of nations accept and embrace cultural diversity with open arms, due to social values that support ethnic diversity (Berry, 1997); (Barrette et al., 2004). The marginalization experience is more common among ethnic minority groups living in exclusionist nations, referring to nations that prevent ethnic minorities from experiencing full equality and full rights within mainstream society (Berry, 2008); (Barrette et al., 2004).

Acevedo (2000) identifies how the acculturation theory can be used to explain pan-cultural differences and similarities among low income Mexican- American women (ethnic minority), and low income European- American women (dominate). Research on 331 Mexican-American women and 263 European - American women, found that Mexican Americans women who under went acculturation as a result of assimilation, had parenting styles that took into account children developement issues, and this was similar to the parenting styles of the dominate cultural group (European- Americans) (Acevedo, 2000). In this study the degree of acculturation was measured based on the ability to speak english, and as result research findings found that english speaking Mexican- American women had high levels of acculturation than

non- english speaking Mexican- American women (Acevedo, 2000). In addittion, non- english speaking Mexican- American women had authoritarian parenting styles that reflected their original cultural practices, and this style of parenting was different from the dominate parenting style practiced by European- American women (Acevedo, 2000). Therefore the acculturation theory can be used to explain cross- cultural differences and similarities in parenting styles among European- American and Mexican- American women, which in turn can be used to highlight the behaviour component of the ABC's of psychology. The above findings from the acculturation theory have important immigration policy implications connected to language (english), acculturation level, and parenting style. For example, in order to increase level of acculturation among immigrants as a means to prevent distress and authoritarian parenting styles, policy makers must provide vigorous and high quality english language learning programs geared towards immigrations. In terms of the cross cultural research perspective, it is evident that other countries would have to provide language learning programs that would reflect their own native language.

Mussap's mental health research on 101 Muslim- Australian women between the ages of 18 and 44 years, found that integration and assimilation acculturative strategies were linked to lower levels of self esteem psychological dissatisfaction linked to body image (2009). Mussap asserts that dominant Australian body image values are psychologically harmful due to the overemphasized thinness equals beauty value (2009). Research indicated that Muslim- Australian women who had undergone acculturation either through assimilation or integration, experienced lower levels of self- esteem linked to body image dissatisfaction. However, Muslim- Australian women who experienced acculturation through the marginalization or separation acculturative

strategy, did not experienced low levels of self- esteems linked to body image dissatisfaction (Mussap, 2009). In terms of ethnic differences and similarities, the acculturation theory points out that dominant ethnic group individuals (Native Australian women) who had internalized the thinness equals beauty value, also experienced low levels of self- esteem linked to body image dissatisfaction (Mussap, 2009). Moreover, native Australian women who did not internalize dominant body image values and ideals did not experience low levels of self esteem linked to body image dissatisfaction (Mussap, 2009). It is evident from the above research findings, that the acculturation theory can be used to explain pan cultural differences and similarities linked to levels of self esteem, which can be associated with the cognitive and affective component of the ABC's. For instance self- esteem is ones overall/ global evaluation of the self, and the evaluative aspect (cognition) can cause either positive or negative emotions/ feelings (affect). With that, the acculturation theory has given researchers the ability to predict levels of self esteem held by ethnic minority women who are between the ages of 18 and 44 years, and who are living in a nation where the thinness equals beauty value dominates. In addittion, the acculturation theory can benefit immigration policy by promoting programs that expose immigrant women to dominate body image ideals and values, in order to provide them with coping mechanism that will prevent low levels of self esteem linked to body image dissatisfaction.

Acculturation research by Haasen, Demiralay, and Reimer (2008), found a significant correlation between the type of acculturation strategy used and acculturative stress. Research done on 202 Russian and 100 Iranian migrants in mainstream Germany, found that assimilation and segregation strategies of acculturation were correlated with long term acculturative stress that influenced feelings of depression (Haasen, Demiralay & Reimer, 2008). Prior to this study

the researchers hypothesized that Iranian migrants would experience more acculturative stress (E.g. Depression) than migrant Russians, as Russians were physical similar to Germans in terms of skin colour (Haasen et. al., 2008). However, research findings nulled the above hypothesis, as the acculturative stress experienced through assimilation was similar for both Russian and Iranian migrants of Germany (Haasen et. al., 2008). Haasen, Demiralay, and Reimer (2008) explained these results by stating that the positive perceptions Iranian migrants had when they enter into Germany (E.g. Germans are justice people), influenced the level of acculturative stress that was found. Therefore the above results and explanation provide an understanding pertaining to pan cultural similarities among distinct ethnic groups, namely Iranian and Russian migrants. The acculturation research above has essential implications for border security guards, customs and immigration personnel, and those who deal with immigrants or migrants. For instance, the above finding illustrates that positive perceptions will counter concerns/ acculturative stress linked to physical appearance differences, and so it is important that officials interact with immigrants and migrants in a manner that fosters positive perceptions about a nation.

Despite the many social, psychological, and legal benefits of acculturation research mentioned above, there are some areas of research that the acculturation theory fails to analyze. Berry's acculturation model/ theory in its original form doesn't strategically analyze the acculturation processes experienced by mixed ethnic group individuals, referring to individuals who have biological parents of different cultural heritages (Ward, 2006). Moreover, the acculturation theory fails to systematically explain the acculturation process experienced by orphans, as orphans are constantly exposed to an institutional cultural atmosphere, despite on going physical contact with children of different cultural backgrounds. Secondly, the

acculturation theory is unable to explain the process in which mainstream ethnic majority individuals experience assimilation, marginalization, separation, or integration when it comes to specific cultural practices/ values such as body image values (Barrette et al., 2004). In relation to this point it is evident that some individuals of the dominant cultural group may not want to adhere to specific cultural practices or ideals associated with their culture, and this in turn may lead to a quasi form of marginalization which the acculturation theory is not prepared to explain. Thirdly, the acculturation theory doesn't provide an explanation for the developement/ formation of new cultures (Berry, 1997), that may result from the on going physical contact between individuals of different cultural groups.

In close, the acculturation theory is a significant culture and psychology phenomenon that should continue to be discussed within pan- cultural discourse. The acculturation theory has exposed researchers to psychological concepts such as acculturative strategies, acculturative stress, self esteem, body image, depression, and cognitive perceptions that have provided researchers with the tools to make valid and reliable predictions regarding an individuals affectivity, behaviour, and cognition. Future acculturation research should focus on modifying and expanding Berry's original acculturation theory, in order for the acculturation theory to be successfully applied to different research contexts as discussed in the previous paragraph. The acculturation theory/ phenomenon formulated by John Berry has provided researchers with a pan- cultural research tool for carrying out reliable and valid cross- cultural research.

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