



Acculturation

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What is it?

Acculturation is a process in which a person or group changes socially, psychologically, and culturally when new to a culture, balancing that with the heritage culture. It means adopting elements (knowledge, values, norms, institutions, skills, techniques, habits, beliefs, language) of the receiving culture. Four categories describe how people adapt to a new society: assimilation (adopt the receiving culture and discard the heritage culture), separation (reject the receiving culture and retain the heritage culture), integration (adopt the receiving culture and retain the heritage culture), and marginalization (reject both cultures).

Who uses the concept?

An interdisciplinary concept, acculturation is used by scholars in anthropology, political science, intercultural communication, sociology, and especially migration studies. Integration and refugee affairs authors use and discuss the concept actively, for it addresses issues such as migrant and post-migrant societies, the relationship between native and migration-background populations, and citizenship. Those in international relations use it to emphasize different forms of neo-colonization, imperialism, and repatriation.

Fit with intercultural dialogue?

Acculturation is a two-way process between those who join a new culture and those who natively belong. Similar to intercultural dialogue, acculturation can happen at both group and individual levels and can occur as a result of in-person communication or

through art, literature, or media. However, acculturation does not offer equal conditions to participants. For instance, in case of migrant societies, typically immigrant groups are culturally or ethnically distinct from the majority in the place to which they have immigrated, thus they are expected to adopt themselves to the receiving culture, not vice versa.

What work remains?

Further work needs to be done on the indicators or so-called adopting elements of acculturation, for example, how to efficiently motivate immigrants to adopt local skills and norms. In addition, research needs to explore barriers in place in the receiving society. It is also important to explore the subjective (and not just objective) success of individuals and groups in an acculturation process.

Resources

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- Mesoudi, A. (2018). Migration, acculturation, and the maintenance of between-group cultural variation. *PLOS One*, 13(10), e0205573.