CHAPTER 4

ACCULTURATION

VIGNETTE

"Call me 'Jessie,' not 'Josefina!'"

Josefina was born in Chicago's heavily Latino Little Pilsen neighborhood. Carlos and Maria, her parents, left Puerto Rico in their early 20s and met in Chicago while working at a factory. Carlos and Maria miss the island and their relatives and Puerto Rican food. Fortunately, Little Pilsen had a good number of markets that sold all the food staples that Carlos and Maria missed including plantains

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and gandules. Carlos often expresses concern for how his kids are not as respectful and courteous as he had been as a teen and blames the American culture for having spoiled his children. He always speaks in Spanish to them and he is often accused by the children of being old-fashioned. Maria speaks English more fluently than her husband and feels perfectly comfortable among her White friends as well as among her Latino neighbors. Josefina is fully bilingual, having learned Spanish at home and English while attending school. She is as comfortable eating rice with gandules as a hamburger at the fast food outlet. She loves rock and rap music and is quite at ease dancing salsa. Her best friends during high school included a non-Latino White boy (to whom she was "Jessie") and two Latinas (one from Puerto Rico and the other a Mexican American). As a junior in high school, Josefina met Robert, a White teen who shared many of Josefina's interests in the arts and in music. Robert often walked Josefina home from school and at times they would listen to music in the living room within view of the kitchen where Maria prepared the evening meal. In April, Robert asked Josefina to the junior prom. She ran home and yelled at the door: "Mami, guess what? Robert asked me to the prom." From the back of the apartment, Carlos shouted back, "Tienes que llevar un chaperón [You have to bring a chaperone]." "I'll die if you force me to do that. Nobody brings chaperones, this is the United States. Papi, olvídate de Puerto Rico, *[Dad, forget Puerto Rico]" retorted Josefina. The discussions lasted many days, and in the end, Josefina did not go to the junior prom because her father never gave up on the idea of a chaperone. Josefina's senior year in high school was a stressful one for the Martinez family. Josefina was intent on getting good grades and a good SAT score that would allow her to get a scholarship to one of the private Catholic universities in the North Shore of Chicago (close enough to the family home but yet far enough to justify staying in the residence halls). She insisted on being addressed as Jessie rather than Josefina and would only speak English at home. She often smoked a cigarette before and after school and spent long hours on the phone speaking in English to all her friends. When the time came for the senior prom, Carlos again insisted that a chaperone was required but relented after talking with his neighbors who assured him that in the United States it was appropriate for a girl to go to a dance without a chaperone.*

Acculturation is, arguably, one of the most frequently mentioned constructs or concepts in ethnic psychology. Indeed, researchers often include some measure of acculturation in their research to analyze differences within ethnic groups and to understand the relationship of acculturation to psychosocial adjustment and health. It is not unusual therefore to read in the psychological literature how acculturation is related to a person's level of adaptability to new social situations or to depression, cigarette smoking, or alcohol use. Likewise, acculturation has been associated with phenomena as varied as intergenerational family conflict, academic performance, and utilization of mental health services. This chapter examines acculturation and the

related construct of biculturalism, their definitions as well as issues related to their measurement and their effects on people's lives.

Despite growing attention to acculturation in the psychological literature, the life of this construct or concept has experienced a history of benign neglect. Since the beginnings of the 20th century, a select group of social scientists, primarily anthropologists and sociologists, has been advocating for more studies of acculturation. These early social scientists initially defined **acculturation** as a process of change that occurs when individuals from different cultures interact and share a common geographical space following migration, political conquest, or forced relocation.

Acculturation has such theoretical and practical significance in ethnic psychology that much of the rest of this book will refer to its influence in the same fashion as culture and ethnicity. Indeed, much of the behavior of Carlos, Maria, and Josefina as described in the story that begins this chapter reflects differences in their levels of acculturation. As is often found among first generation individuals who show low levels of acculturation, Carlos struggles to maintain not only the language of his country of origin, but also its cultural practices and values. Maria, on the other hand, also a first generation individual, has learned English, has a number of friends who are not Latinos, and feels comfortable interacting with people of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Josefina, as a more acculturated second generation Latina, often finds herself in conflict with the traditional practices of her parents' country of origin. While bilingual, she prefers to speak in English; she changes her name to "Jessie," and considers some practices that were normative in Puerto Rico to be old-fashioned although she enjoys its food, music, and other cultural expressions.

Much of the early research on acculturation suffered severe conceptual limitations including a simplistic assumption that acculturation inevitably leads to a weakening of one's original cultural identity and practices. This assumption reflects a **unidirectional model of acculturation** in which culture change is thought to occur in one direction—people *move away* from their culture of origin and *toward* the dominant group during resettlement in a new country. This unidirectional model of acculturation, which is discussed in greater detail below, was predominant in the United States at the beginning of the 20th century and reflected such ideas as the "melting pot" paradigm where newcomers were expected to mimic as much as possible the members of the "host" or dominant group.

This assumption about the unidirectionality of the acculturation process has been criticized by a number of researchers (see Chun, Balls Organista, & Marín, 2003) who prefer to think of acculturation as a more complex phenomenon that considers at least two cultural dimensions where, like

Josefina, an individual may retain some aspects of the culture of origin and also learn and favor aspects of the new culture. This more complex understanding of acculturation is often perceived as promoting a society characterized by individuals who are comfortable in various cultural settings, producing what is often termed a "cultural mosaic" rather than a melting pot soup. Before analyzing these differences in the way acculturation has been conceptualized, it is important to better define the term.

DEFINING ACCULTURATION

In the simplest terms, acculturation can be defined as a culture learning process experienced by individuals who are exposed to a new culture or ethnic group. While this process can occur among tourists and individuals who travel briefly abroad, in this chapter we are concerned primarily with acculturation as experienced by individuals who are exposed and learn a new culture over lengthier periods of time.

As such, we are interested in studying individuals who experience a new culture due to permanent or long-term resettlement and relocation. For example, when a large part of the southwestern United States was ceded by Mexico after the U.S.-Mexico war in the 1840s, the Mexicans who resided in what is now Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and California were exposed to the European American culture of the eastern United States. Consequently, the Mexicans had to undergo an imposed process of culture learning. The European American newcomers also had to undergo a process of acculturation to the Mexican and Spanish culture of the residents in the area. At a fairly superficial level, we could argue that this process of culture learning forced the original residents (the Mexicans) to learn to speak English and eat hot dogs while the newly arrived (eastern U.S. citizens) learned some Spanish and began to appreciate tacos and tortillas. As psychologists, we are interested in understanding the extent of these changes in behavior as well as trying to determine how exposure to one culture affects the values, attitudes, and psychological well-being of the new and old residents of a given area.

The process of acculturation is not limited to individuals who are forced to change their nationality because of political events such as the ones described above. Immigrants and short-term "foreign workers" or "guest workers" also experience the acculturation process as they change their residence and are exposed to a new culture. Forced relocation and enslavement, as happened with Africans to the United States and to other countries in the Americas, also produce the process of culture learning that we call acculturation. Also important to remember is the fact that the receiving or

"host" ethnic or cultural group undergoes the process of acculturation as its members are exposed to new ways of thinking and acting. In that fashion, we can talk about acculturation promoting the development of bicultural individuals in nations or cultures where two or more cultures come in contact with each other and where their residents learn the attitudes, values, behavior, and other cultural aspects of the ethnic groups with whom they interact. Multicultural societies like the United States that have been created by the contributions of immigrants from many places are enriched by the presence of multiple cultures where diverse groups share their beliefs, values, attitudes, and ways of behaving.

Also important is the fact that the process of acculturation can be a long-term phenomenon affecting various generations. Indeed, acculturation is not limited to immigrants but it also takes place among their children and grandchildren. In fact, individuals are changing and learning new values, attitudes, and behaviors whenever two or more cultures come in contact with each other.

Before delving more deeply into the meaning of acculturation and its implications in psychological research, it is important to mention that other social scientists often use different terms to refer to what we call acculturation. It is not uncommon, for example, to read sociological and anthropological literature that uses terms such as "incorporation" or "assimilation" to refer to concepts fairly similar to what psychologists address as "acculturation." Indeed, much contemporary research in sociology and anthropology uses words such as **"cultural assimilation"** and "cultural integration" to define the acculturation process. This variability in terminology lends itself to confusion not only based on the possible differing meanings but also because there is a difference in emphasis. By using terms such as "incorporation" and "assimilation," sociologists and anthropologists tend to emphasize the characteristics of the larger groups such as when studies address the characteristics of an ethnic group that facilitate or promote its "civic incorporation" by becoming citizens, voting, participating in town hall meetings, and so on. Psychologists, on the other hand, tend to emphasize the more personal characteristics of the process demonstrated through changes in personal values or beliefs or behavior generally analyzed from a more individualized perspective.

Unfortunately, these variations in terminology and emphasis have undermined the advancement of the field and of our understanding of the acculturation process when there is little cross-fertilization between fields. While most of the literature cited in this chapter comes from psychologists, we have endeavored to include relevant works by sociologists and anthropologists since their perspectives enrich our understanding of what is a very complicated human activity.

Early Definitions

One of the earliest and most useful definitions of acculturation emphasized direct contact across ethnic groups and the fact that both groups would undergo changes:

Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups. (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936, p. 149)

A subsequent definition proposed the idea that there could be multiple causes for acculturation and that its effects could be not only varied but also observed and measured over varying amounts of time:

[Acculturation is] culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems. Acculturative change may be the consequence of direct cultural transmission; it may be derived from non-cultural causes, such as ecological or demographic modification induced by an impinging culture; it may be delayed, as with internal adjustments following upon the acceptance of alien traits or patterns; or it may be a reactive adaptation of transitional modes of life. (Social Science Research Council, 1954, p. 974)

In his influential analysis of assimilation in the United States, the sociologist Milton Gordon (1964) suggested that acculturation needed to be differentiated from **structural assimilation** whereby the latter is defined as the incorporation of members of ethnic groups into primary relationships (e.g., social clubs, marriage) with individuals from the majority group. At the same time, Gordon defined acculturation as the adoption of the cultural norms and behavioral patterns of the majority group (often called the "core culture"), a process he considered as an essential component of the experiences of ethnic groups. Gordon's definition of acculturation influenced social science literature for many decades and determined our understanding of acculturation as those changes occurring in the immigrant group as it tries to emulate or imitate the majority group. Gordon also suggested that the changes implied in the acculturation process were more rapid among external traits (such as clothing, language, outward expression of emotions) while the more intrinsic personal characteristics (such as values, norms, or religious beliefs) would take longer to change if at all.

More recently, the sociologist Herbert Gans (1999) has defined acculturation as "the newcomers' adoption of the culture, that is, the behavior patterns or practices, values, rules, symbols, and so forth, of the host society (or rather an overly homogenized and reified conception of it)" (p. 162). This definition is significant because it moves closer to a psychosocial understanding of the concept and it acknowledges that a group's culture is an abstraction that is considered as something concrete (what he calls a "reified conception"). At the same time, Gans defines **assimilation** as an interactive process (that may not require changes in the person's values or beliefs as acculturation does) and that can best be characterized by behaviors where "the newcomers move out of formal and informal ethnic associations and other social institutions and into the host society's non-ethnic ones" (p. 162). Gans suggests that this distinction allows for the assimilation and acculturation processes to proceed at different speeds. This perspective is particularly important because it reflects the realities of assimilation being driven externally by social stratification or socioeconomic class as well as by prejudice and discrimination that may speed or slow down the ethnic group's assimilation (or incorporation as some other researchers would call it) into the social and civic fabric of the majority group or of the receiving country. It is important to remember that these processes are not unique to immigrants but that their children and grandchildren also may experience them.

In this book, we define **acculturation** as

> a dynamic and multidimensional process of adaptation that occurs when distinct cultures come into sustained contact. It involves different degrees and instances of culture learning and maintenance that are contingent upon individual, group, and environmental factors. Acculturation is dynamic because it is a continuous and fluctuating process and it is multidimensional because it transpires across numerous indices of psychosocial functioning and can result in multiple adaptation outcomes.

This definition reflects our current understanding of acculturation as a continuous and dynamic process that takes place in different aspects of a person's life (what we call "multidimensional") and that is affected by the personal and social experiences of the individuals undergoing acculturation.

In general, researchers have emphasized the acculturational experiences of individuals who migrate or whose families migrated in the recent past. These studies have analyzed how individuals learn a new culture and its related attitudes, values, and behaviors. Unfortunately, little attention has been given to the changes that these groups produce in the "host" or receiving society. As can be seen in most of the definitions of acculturation reviewed above, there

is the assumption that immigrants and their descendants learn about the new culture but little is said about the fact that the new culture is in turn modified by their presence. Likewise, little attention has been given to the acculturation process of the children and grandchildren of immigrants who also are exposed to this multidimensional process of personal development.

ACCULTURATION, ASSIMILATION, AND SEGMENTED ASSIMILATION

Countries such as the United States that saw significant migratory waves during the 19th and early 20th centuries experienced calls from politicians and social scientists who supported the goal of trying to create a common culture made up of many—a concept enshrined in its national ethos as *E Pluribus Unum* [Out of Many, One]. This push toward assimilation generally implied that immigrants would need to subdue or reject those values, attitudes, and behaviors that had characterized their cultures of origin as they learned and internalized the cultural characteristics perceived to define White Anglo-Saxon Protestants. At the same time that a variety of social forces and institutions (e.g., schools, churches) were pushing for cultural and behavioral assimilation, various early migrant groups established strong communities (e.g., Little Italy, Chinatown) that reinforced their ties to the culture of origin while supporting a process of biculturalism that would allow them to work effectively in both cultural communities.

In many cases, assimilation in the early 19th and 20th centuries was also promoted through indirect methods such as what the sociologist Alejandro Portes (1999) calls "symbolic violence," which is exemplified by immigrants in Ellis Island and in Angel Island being forced to assume anglicized names whenever immigration officers did not know or care to properly spell the names of members of minority groups. For example, Portes reports how a German Jew experiencing stressful reactions to the questioning of immigration officers said, *"Schoyn vergessen"* (Yiddish for "I forget") and was thereafter known as "Sean Ferguson."

It should be noted that acculturation is not a phenomenon unique to the United States or to countries that have experienced significant migratory waves. Many nations around the world include a variety of ethnic or cultural groups within their boundaries that have shared a given geographical space for centuries as in the case of Spain where Basques, Catalans, Galicians, and other cultural groups have shared parts of the Iberian Peninsula. The current phenomenon of **globalization** also can be seen as promoting some type of acculturation around the world by facilitating personal mobility across borders and the sharing of cultures and values through music, electronic and print

media, and education. For example, the values reflected in songs by American rappers, Icelandic singer Bjork, or the Irish group U2 are heard throughout the world in the same way that the British magazine *The Economist* or *Newsweek* can be found in magazine kiosks almost everywhere.

The contributions of ethnic psychology researchers have produced an evaluation of the usefulness of the construct of assimilation. Indeed, Alba and Nee (1999) noted that "assimilation has come to be viewed by social scientists as a worn-out theory that imposes ethnocentric and patronizing demands on minority peoples struggling to retain their cultural and ethnic integrity" (p. 137). While Alba and Nee argue that assimilation as a construct in the social sciences is still useful, the term has been misused to imply the assumed inevitable outcome of absorption of minorities into a more homogeneous or common culture. In this sense, assimilation is a problematic term.

As a matter of fact, the anthropologist Nancy Foner (1999) has argued that the traditional concept of assimilation is an inaccurate description of the lives of immigrants and of those undergoing processes of culture learning. Foner proposes that assimilation is too simplistic a concept to analyze people's lives in this country since there is "no undifferentiated, monolithic 'American' culture" (p. 260). This criticism of traditional assimilationist thinking in the social sciences has given birth to the new construct of "segmented assimilation," which more appropriately defines the changes in social behavior that take place as people acculturate (Portes, 1999).

Segmented assimilation is defined by Foner (1999) as a process of assimilation into a particular social segment ranging from the middle to the lower classes. Indeed, sociologists (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001; M. Zhou, 1999) argue that the path taken in segmented assimilation depends on factors such as varying economic opportunity and other structural constraints, the pervasiveness of racial discrimination, as well as the segment of American society to which the immigrants are exposed more frequently. In that sense, Rumbaut and Portes suggest that

> one path may follow the so-called straight line theory . . . of assimilation into the middle-class majority; an opposite type of adaptation may lead to downward mobility and assimilation into the inner-city underclass; yet another may combine upward mobility and heightened ethnic aware-ness within solidaristic immigrant enclaves. (p. 188)

Foner (1999) further argues that the process of segmented assimilation does not necessarily imply the complete internalization of the new values and behaviors. In this sense, we could expect behavioral changes that reflect or resemble those of members of the majority (segmented assimilation)

although the individual may not have completely internalized their values or attitudes (acculturation). This is indeed an important differentiation in terms and in processes that helps to better understand the changes that immigrants and those of later generations undergo as they learn new cultures. The end result of these two processes is that the cultures of immigrant minority ethnic groups can very well differ from those of the dominant culture as well as from the culture of origin. We could then witness a process of the creation of what practically could be considered a new ethnicity (a hyphenated ethnicity such as "Filipino-Americans" or "Mexican-Americans") that benefits from multiple perspectives and cultures. Foner quotes the groundbreaking works of William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki (1918) on Polish Americans at the beginning of the 20th century when they conclude that there has been the "creation of a society in which structure and prevalent attitudes is neither Polish nor American but constitutes a specific new product whose raw materials have been partly drawn from Polish traditions, partly from the new conditions in which the immigrants live, and partly from American social values as the immigrant sees and interprets them" (p. 108).

MODELS OF ACCULTURATION

The fact that acculturation has been of interest to a variety of social scientists including anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists is reflected in the different models and definitions of the term as seen above as well as in the type of acculturation effects that are studied as reviewed in this section of the chapter.

Ethnogenesis

Within a more macrosocial perspective, sociologists and anthropologists generally have argued for the study of how acculturation allows individuals to not just learn the new culture but also integrate themselves into different "subcultures" of the majority group based on factors as complex as social class and experiences of discrimination and privilege. This process, called **ethnogenesis,** can be expected to produce a mixed set of values and behaviors that characterize the specific ethnic group and that are somewhat different from those of the original culture or of those of the dominant group.

Ethnogenesis produces changes in certain values and attitudes and their related behaviors that affect not only clothing styles, musical preferences, or speech patterns but also religious beliefs and basic cultural values. For example, Foner (1999) describes how Jamaican immigrants to the United

States change their gender role expectations of men by making them more responsible for home duties without giving up the perception of the home as the woman's domain. Other studies have shown changes among Vietnamese Americans in the definition of kinship (i.e., who is considered a relative) and the perception of who belongs to the extended family (Kibria, 1993), or differentiations in the meaning of basic cultural values such as familialism among Latinos (Sabogal et al., 1987).

Returning to our story at the beginning of the chapter, we could very well expect that the experiences of Latinos in Chicago's Little Pilsen where Latinos with heritage roots in Puerto Rico and Mexico interact with immigrants from Central and South America as well as with African Americans have created a mixed culture for each of those groups. We could hypothesize that the Puerto Rican American "culture" in which Josefina was raised was a combination of traditional Puerto Rican attitudes and values (such as the need for chaperones), together with the cultural characteristics of the groups that shared the neighborhood or the larger Chicago metropolitan area (which may not adhere to the usefulness of chaperones), as well as a Puerto Rican American component that may have evolved over the years as more second and third generation individuals inhabit the area. Examples of popular culture manifestations of this ethnogenesis can be seen in bilingual rock and rap music or the recent emergence of music mixing reggae and rap rhythms and sung in mixtures of English and Spanish such as can be found in the music of Orishas, who mixes Cuban and Caribbean rhythms with rap, or other popular contemporary artists such as Gwen Stefani.

Emphasis on the Individual

For over three decades, the Canadian psychologist John Berry (2003) has advocated a comprehensive framework for understanding the process and changes implied in the acculturation process as they affect the individual. While Berry's model is not the only one available in the literature that explains the effects of acculturation on the individual, it is very useful in understanding the varieties of possible responses to exposure to new cultures.

Berry (2003) suggests that as a result of exposure to two or more cultures, an individual experiences at least two types of changes. At one level are behavioral shifts that affect the way the individual acts in areas as diverse as speech patterns, eating habits, clothing styles, or even self-identity. A second level covers acculturative stress that includes emotional reactions on the part of the individual that can include anxiety and depression (Berry, 1980; Sam & Berry, 2006). A later section in this chapter explores acculturative stress in

greater detail but at this point it is important to consider that acculturative stress is related to factors as varied as the need to learn new behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes and the realization of how different or even incompatible two cultures can be. For example, an immigrant from India may, after residing for a while in the United States, start wearing saris less frequently and to self-identify as an "Asian American" rather than as "Indian." At the same time, these acculturative experiences may produce personal and interpersonal conflicts regarding deeply ingrained cultural practices or values (e.g., arranged marriages or vegetarian diets) that may in turn promote feelings of anxiety or even psychological depression.

One of Berry's most important contributions to the study of acculturation has been his insistence on the need to consider the multiple types of responses that an individual can have to acculturation. While initially Berry (1980) talked about "varieties of acculturation," the term he currently prefers is "acculturation strategies" or "acculturation modes" (Berry, 2003). An individual's choice of a strategy depends on such previous circumstances as the person's level of involvement with each culture as well as specific attitudinal and behavioral preferences and characteristics. The choice of a particular **acculturative strategy** would reflect the attitudes or orientation that an individual assumes toward the culture of origin (or "heritage culture") and toward the other group or groups. This model therefore requires considering two dimensions. One reflects the individual's positive or negative attitude toward maintenance of the heritage culture and identity. The second dimension (also from a negative to positive continuum) classifies the individual in terms of the preferred level and type of interaction with another group or groups.

For Berry (2003), an individual's acculturation can therefore be described as approaching one of four different strategies (see Table 4.1) that are the product of the interaction of the dimensions mentioned above:

1. *Assimilation.* When an individual wishes to diminish or decrease the significance of the culture of origin and desires to identify and interact primarily with the other culture, typically with the dominant culture if one comes from an ethnic minority group.

2. *Separation.* Whenever the individual wishes to hold on to the original culture and avoids interacting or learning about the other culture(s).

3. *Marginalization.* Individuals show little involvement in maintaining the culture of origin or in learning about the other culture(s).

4. *Integration.* When a person shows an interest in maintaining the original culture and in learning and participating in the other culture(s).

Table 4.1 Acculturation Strategies Based on Attitudes Toward Learning a New Culture and Keeping the Heritage Culture

		Attitude Toward Keeping Heritage Culture and Identity	
		Positive	Negative
Attitude Toward Learning and Interacting With New Culture	Positive	Integration	Assimilation
	Negative	Separation	Marginalization

SOURCE: Based on Berry (2003).

In general, the fewest behavioral and attitudinal changes on the part of the individual can be found among individuals who have chosen the *separation* strategy and the largest number among those using the *assimilation* strategy (Berry, 2003). *Integration,* and to some extent *marginalization,* implies a selective process of maintenance and rejection that involves a moderate level of behavioral changes. In terms of acculturative stress, Berry (2003) suggests that integration implies the lowest levels of stress while marginalization would be associated with the highest levels of stress. By choosing an integration strategy, acculturating individuals can be expected to experience lower levels of personal stress since they are able to acquire the cultural characteristics of the new culture (as expected by members of the new culture or group) while continuing to value the culture of heritage (as possibly expected by parents, siblings, and friends). At the same time, assimilation and separation strategies would be associated with moderate levels of stress since they imply a selection process that may not be supported or appreciated by the individual's relatives or friends.

As can be seen from the above description of Berry's (2003) strategies for acculturation, marginalization can result in serious psychological problems for individuals resorting to or being forced to assume such a strategy. As a matter of fact, Berry suggests that marginalization is likely to be the result of failed attempts at assimilation combined with experiences of discrimination. Furthermore, Berry argues that individuals can choose integration as an acculturation strategy primarily in societies that have open and inclusive orientations toward ethnic and cultural diversity indicated by the value placed on multiculturalism, relatively low levels of ethnic prejudice and discrimination, absence of intergroup hatred, and a generalized sense of identification with the culture of the larger society

(Berry, 2003). The actual level of choice of an acculturation strategy that individuals experience (e.g., if it is imposed or if it is freely chosen) can also affect the level of stress associated with the acculturation process. For example, separation as a strategy can be less stressful if it is chosen rather than forced on individuals, as could be the case in examples of group segregation.

The members of the Martinez family as described at the beginning of the chapter can be considered to exhibit at least three of Berry's acculturation strategies. Carlos, through his emphasis on maintaining the Puerto Rican culture in his life and in his family, could be considered to have primarily adopted a separation strategy. His wife's behavior could be an example of an integration strategy, given her emphasis on enacting behaviors and espousing attitudes and values that are more closely related to the dominant U.S. culture. Their daughter Jessie could be considered as an example of an assimilation strategy, particularly during her senior year where she chose to separate herself as much as possible from the Puerto Rican heritage of her family.

In general, Berry's model of acculturation has been found useful in a variety of settings (see, e.g., Sam & Berry, 2006). While measuring the four strategies is at times difficult, the Bidimensional Acculturation Scale for Hispanics or BAS (Marín & Gamba, 1996) produces scores that can be easily related to Berry's four acculturational strategies. Studies with Korean Americans (S.-K. Lee, Sobal, & Frongillo, 2003) and with Vietnamese Americans (Pham & Harris, 2001) have found that the model was applicable to describing the acculturational experiences of the groups being studied.

Nevertheless, some authors (Del Pilar & Udasco, 2004) have questioned the practical possibility of marginalization where individuals show little interest in maintaining the culture of origin or learning a new culture. These authors argue that even in cases of colonization and discrimination, individuals reframe or reformulate their culture of origin rather than losing the culture and being left "cultureless." Another possible limitation to Berry's model is its applicability to individuals who belong to more than two ethnicities or cultures. While the model does not intrinsically ignore persons who have more than two ethnic heritages, it is much more difficult to apply in those conditions. For example, a child born of Chinese and Latino parents can choose an integration strategy into the dominant White culture while maintaining the Chinese and Latino heritage learned from the parents. The difficulties for the model's usefulness ensue when the hypothetical individual wishes to diminish the significance of one of the cultures of origin

while maintaining the other. In these types of cases, the model is more difficult to use since it does not provide a predicted outcome.

The Role of Social Context

A different model of the acculturation process has been suggested by Rumbaut and Portes (2001). Reflecting its sociological roots, the model emphasizes the social context in which acculturation takes place rather than individual processes that are the basis of psychological models of acculturation. Rumbaut and Portes suggest that the results of the acculturation process, particularly for second generation individuals, are dependent on background factors of the immigrant parents such as their personal characteristics (or "human capital"), the structure of the family, parental levels of civic incorporation, experiences with discrimination, and the presence of ethnic subcultures in which the second generation individuals are raised.

This model of acculturation (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001) that emphasizes the social context in acculturation suggests two possible extreme outcomes. At one end is a process of **downward assimilation** that is the result of divergent levels of acculturation between parents and children (see the section below on generational differences in acculturation) as well as the experiences of racial and ethnic discrimination and negative experiences in the labor market and residential environments. At the other end of the continuum is a process of engagement with and acceptance of two cultures or biculturalism (as discussed below) that is produced by the selective acculturation of the parents, the presence of supportive ethnic networks, and the presence of community resources and strong familial and community networks. This process of selective acculturation characterized by biculturalism is defined as leading to "better psychosocial and achievement outcomes because it preserves bonds across immigrant generations and gives children a clear reference point to guide their future lives" (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001, p. 309).

A study with Soviet Jewish refugees in the United States (Birman & Trickett, 2001) showed that indeed there were generational differences in civic incorporation and acculturation with the older first generation refugees maintaining Russian language proficiency to a greater extent than their children regardless of their length of residence in the United States. The children, probably due to the support system they encountered, exhibited a greater sense of Russian identity than the parents although behaviorally they

showed the greatest level of acculturation, probably exhibiting the biculturalism proposed by the Rumbaut and Portes model and reinforcing the importance of the social context in promoting acculturation and adaptation to a new culture (Birman, Trickett, & Buchanan, 2005).

Biculturalism

Biculturalism is one of the outcomes of the acculturation process that is mentioned in most acculturative models. Individuals choosing the integration strategy in Berry's acculturation model (described above) can be considered to be bicultural. Indeed, some researchers (e.g., Buriel & Saenz, 1980; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1980) have suggested that special attention should be given to understanding those individuals who are knowledgeable about two cultures and who feel perfectly comfortable interacting in either culture group or among members of either ethnic group. For example, an immigrant from Vietnam to the United States can become a truly bicultural Vietnamese American after not just learning English but incorporating values and behaviors that define the "mainstream" U.S culture while maintaining a significant proportion of the values and behaviors that characterize Vietnam.

Biculturalism is present not just among immigrants or members of a majority or dominant culture but also among the children of ethnically mixed households or families. Households where one parent is a member of one ethnic or cultural group (e.g., White non-Hispanic) and the other parent belongs to a different ethnic group (e.g., an African American) are likely to raise children who exhibit the characteristics of biculturalism by engagement with both cultures. Parents can choose to foster a home environment that allows their children to learn both cultures and to feel comfortable in either one. The 2000 census of the United States showed that 6.8 million people (or 2.4% of the total population) considered themselves to belong to more than one race (N. A. Jones & Smith, 2003). The largest proportion involved mixtures of White and American Indian (15.9%) followed by Whites and Asians (12.7%) and Whites and Blacks (11.5%). As suggested by the various acculturation models, the external conditions of exposure to more than one culture (whether in society or in the family) alone do not necessarily produce truly bicultural individuals. There is a need for the presence of family and social conditions that reinforce bicultural identity and behavior and for the individual's active acceptance of the cultures (Root, 2003).

Although psychological research on the adaptiveness of bicultural individuals is limited (Rudmin, 2003), the literature shows that bicultural individuals have some special characteristics that distinguish them from others (e.g., LaFromboise et al., 1993). Generally, bicultural individuals are proficient not just at using the language of both cultural groups (if they differ) but, more important, in understanding the values of both groups and the associated behavioral expectancies. Bicultural individuals have been shown to have significant cognitive flexibility by easily switching from one cultural framework to the other when exposed to culture-specific symbols or to cultural stimuli that are present in the social environment (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000). Other studies (A. O. Miranda & Umhoefer, 1998) have found that when compared to monoculturals, bicultural individuals tend to show psychological well-being that includes lower levels of depression and greater sense of self-worth (Birman, 1998). LaFromboise et al. (1993) suggest that among bicultural individuals "in addition to having a strong and stable sense of personal identity, another affective element of bicultural competence is the ability to develop and maintain positive attitudes toward one's culture of origin and the second culture in which he or she is attempting to acquire competence" (p. 408). In addition, LaFromboise and colleagues argue that people who develop bicultural competencies exhibit better physical and mental health and "outperform their monoculturally competent peers in vocational and academic endeavors" (p. 409). Nevertheless, much of this research measures associations among variables since it is correlational in nature and causality or the direction of the biculturalism–well-being relationship remains a matter of conjecture.

Enculturation

Individuals who endeavor to learn or affirm their culture of origin are often described as undergoing a process of **enculturation** (Soldier, 1985). This phenomenon, which can also be considered as another model of acculturation, is often found among individuals who are three or four generations removed from a particular ethnic or cultural group and who wish now to rediscover those cultural and ethnic roots and make them part of their attitudinal and behavioral repertoire (Hansen, 1952). For example, Goering (1971) found that ethnicity and the sense of belonging to an ethnic group was of greater importance to third generation Irish Americans and Italian Americans than to first generation immigrants.

As suggested by various acculturation models, certain behaviors or attitudes and even values tend to become less salient or less personally important from one generation to the next (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001). Even by the second generation (that is, individuals who were born in the United States to immigrants), some behaviors and some cultural characteristics start to disappear. These changes usually occur at what Marín (1992) calls the superficial and intermediate levels of cultural change that often involve changes in eating habits, variations in preference for ethnic media, and less frequent use of ethnic social scripts (a culture's mores or preferred behavioral patterns). On the other hand, individuals who wish to enculturate would try to recover those practices and beliefs that were lost in previous generations and make them more central to their own (Soldier, 1985; Wilbert, 1976).

Research with American Indians (Zimmerman, Ramirez-Valles, Washienko, Walter, & Dyer, 1996) has shown that enculturation can be measured by evaluating individuals' sense of pride and interest in their culture including the importance assigned to maintaining American Indian practices and values, the level of knowledge of traditional culture that they are able to report, and their overall sense of pride in being a Native American. Also relevant in this enculturation process of American Indians was the level of involvement in ethnic activities such as sweat lodges, powwows, learning lodges, and fastings. A study with Louisiana Cajuns (Henry & Bankston, 1999) found that while significant acculturation had taken place across generations, there was a recent resurgence in enculturation focused on their Cajun identity and Acadian heritage that included such behaviors as learning French (even if they seldom used it) and a sense of ethnic pride that went beyond their social status.

Unfortunately, enculturation has received little attention from researchers. Nevertheless, there is evidence of renewed interest in "one's own roots" on the part of individuals who are third or higher generation or who had stopped considering themselves as a "hyphenated American" (as in "Italian-American" or "Irish-American"). This concern is being shown in terms of increased interest in genealogies, visiting ancestral homes, and learning the language and culture of those relatives who first migrated to the United States.

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES AND ACCULTURATION

Much research on acculturation has emphasized the fact that across generations, members of ethnic groups differ in their level and speed of acculturation.

In general, second and third generation individuals tend to exhibit greater levels of acculturation to the host culture than first generation members of an ethnic group (W. Perez & Padilla, 2000). These variations in level and speed of acculturation are not surprising since they tend to be related to length of residence in the "host" country as well as to the greater exposure to acculturating institutions (schools, churches, social groups) often experienced by second and higher generation members.

The phenomenon of generational differences in acculturation is best exemplified when the first generation adults have migrated as adults and either have brought young children along or had children after arriving in the United States. In some cases, the first generation adult immigrants experience difficulties in becoming proficient in the language or in understanding the requirements of the civil society for full incorporation (e.g., passing driving tests, becoming citizens) while their children because of their upbringing in schools are more proficient in English and are better able, in some cases, to navigate the requirements of a bureaucracy. Some researchers have indeed noted how the children of immigrants (even when first generation themselves) become their "parents' parents" by being translators and information brokers in the family. These differential patterns of acculturation, labeled **dissonant acculturation** by Portes (1999), often produce conflict in the family and in some cases have been associated with behavioral problems in second generation children including abuse of drugs, truancy, and disciplinary problems (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1980).

The role reversals (as when children take on responsibilities usually assigned to parents in the family) are often perceived as undercutting parental authority and limiting the role of parents in controlling adolescents. The acculturation process and a renewed sense of independence probably also contribute to these difficulties in the behavior of second generation adolescents. Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that intergenerational conflict is not an exclusive phenomenon among immigrants (Berrol, 1995) but something that seems to be central to the value that American society places on independence. A study by Carola Suárez-Orozco and Marcelo Suárez-Orozco (1995) showed that while intergenerational conflict was present among Latinos and Whites, it was more common and more extended among the latter. At the same time, M. Zhou (1999) has suggested that immigrant children who live in inner cities and who rebel against parental values and their mobility expectations are likely to experience downward mobility and to develop an adversarial outlook as a response to the discrimination they experience and the limited opportunities to move upwardly in social class. Chapter 6 presents a more

comprehensive analysis of the role of acculturation in family dynamics particularly when intergenerational conflict occurs.

ACCULTURATIVE STRESS

The challenges and difficulties experienced by acculturating individuals have been labeled by many authors as **acculturative stress** (or acculturational stress). The constellation of pressures to change and the presence of unfamiliar external social and physical environmental conditions are hypothesized as producing stressful conditions on acculturating individuals. The personal success at coping with those stressful conditions is related to an overall sense of well-being and to physical and mental health correlates. For example, an immigrant arriving in the United States will need in many cases to learn a new language; master new social conventions related to group and interpersonal behavior (e.g., when to shake hands, how to address superiors, how much interpersonal distance to keep); gain skills at dealing with government bureaucracies and civic entities (e.g., how to get a social security card, how to obtain a driver's license, how to enroll children in school); learn to perform job skills that may be very different from those used in the past (e.g., how to use an English-language keyboard, how to use a machine at work); learn daily logistics (e.g., how to use public transport, where to get stamps, how to get a telephone), as well as learning and respecting new cultural values (e.g., individualism, competition, sense of fair play, trust in civic institutions). In many cases, these situations must be handled with little previous preparation and over a short period of time. While all geographic dislocation is difficult (even when a New Yorker moves to Los Angeles), crossing cultures can be even more complex given the variety and intricacy of changes that are implied in such a move. Furthermore, the conditions that are related to acculturative stress do not disappear after a few months but may be present over a period of many years.

Acculturative stress can also occur at a family level where varying levels of acculturation when parents are compared to their children increase the likelihood for parent-child conflict and marital discord. Nevertheless, certain personal traits (e.g., being a younger versus an older adult), abilities and skills (such as being bicultural, having a high level of formal education), acculturation strategies chosen (e.g., integration versus marginalization), and goals and motives (feeling "pulled" toward a host country by greater economic and educational opportunities versus being "pushed" out of one's country of origin due to war, poverty, unemployment) may serve as protective or causal factors for acculturative stress.

Acculturative stress is related to a number of variables. For example, research with Latino adults (A. O. Miranda & Matheny, 2000) showed that acculturative stress was related to low levels of cohesion of the family, poor English language ability, and the length of residence in the United States. Subsequent research (Rodriguez, Myers, Mira, Flores, & Garcia-Hernandez, 2002) has shown that acculturative stress is related to linguistic competence (e.g., perceived pressures to learn a language, speaking with an accent), pressures to assimilate, and pressures against acculturation (e.g., people's rejection for the individual espousing majority cultural values). This last study found that the language competency variables seem to be the most important sources of acculturative stress. Not surprisingly, the significance of language competency in promoting acculturative stress is more marked among recent immigrants (Gil & Vega, 1996) and often produced by the presence of members of the same ethnic group who are already proficient in the majority language (Holleran, 2003).

A study with Cambodian and Vietnamese refugees (Nwadiora & McAdoo, 1996) also showed the significant impact of English-language deficiencies in producing acculturative stress together with unemployment and limited levels of formal education. Also relevant in producing acculturative stress is the presence of negative reactions individuals get from members of the majority group. Studies with Latinos (Sanchez & Fernandez, 1993) and with Arab Americans (Faragallah, Schumm, & Webb, 1997) have shown that experiences of discrimination or social rejection are related to acculturative stress.

Both women and men seem to experience fairly similar levels of acculturative stress at least among refugees (Nwadiora & McAdoo, 1996) and it seems to be more likely among those who emigrate after 12 years of age (Mena, Padilla, & Maldonado, 1987). Recently, Padilla and Perez (2003) have argued that acculturation is most difficult for those individuals who are visibly different from the majority group in terms of factors such as the color of their skin and language spoken. Among immigrants, the realization that relatives and friends left behind are no longer a source of emotional, personal, and financial support can also be the product of acculturative stress. Likewise, a type of "survivor guilt" may be associated with the acculturation process where stress is felt by acculturating individuals who realize that their friends and relatives back home will not have the same experiences and opportunities that they are able to enjoy in the new country.

It should be noted that the acculturation process is not necessarily always stressful. As Rogler, Cortes, and Malgady (1991) have noted, acculturating individuals also have positive experiences including feeling safer and better off than those in their country of origin. In addition, immigrants experience in many cases positive incidents in their new culture with new friends and coworkers and may enjoy the newly discovered foods, entertainment, sights, and conveniences that balance to some extent the impact of the acculturative

stressors. Nevertheless, the positive effects of these new experiences may decrease after the novelty wears off and acculturating individuals often need to cope with experiences of prejudice and discrimination and the realization that, in many cases, their socioeconomic status is not rapidly improving, that only a few drive fancy cars, or that not everybody in the country lives in the homes portrayed in Hollywood movies. Indeed, the shattering of numerous myths about the United States, such as the ability to improve one's life if only you work hard or the more improbable images of "streets being paved with gold" or "dollars hanging from trees," can be particularly stressful to immigrants as they acculturate. Likewise, acculturative stress is generated as individuals must cope with the stratification processes of society in the United States where, in many cases, the color of their skin or the culture of origin or the use of accented speech determines the type of societal rewards and opportunities a person is able to receive. The poor quality of schools in many ethnic neighborhoods, for example, limits the potential for social advancement of many first and second generation individuals who experience limitations in the kind of employment they can obtain or the possibility of attending college.

Acculturative Stress and Reason for Migration

An important consideration when analyzing acculturative stress is the reason or the causes for migration. The nature of the migration experience (e.g., whether it was voluntary or forced) can be expected to affect the disposition of the immigrant toward the new culture and its people. Ogbu (1978) argued that voluntary migrants, that is, those who choose to migrate for employment or for educational or economic improvement, will react differently to the new experiences than those who have been enslaved, colonized, or forced to migrate or relocate for political reasons such as American Indians, African Americans, or Puerto Ricans. For Ogbu, involuntary migrants (and by extension their children and grandchildren) have greater difficulty in accepting the values of the mainstream or "host" culture, which in turn leads to failure in academic activities and to low-status employment.

M. Zhou (1999) suggests that indeed immigrants who reside in an ethnic inner-city enclave tend to have children who face an adversarial outlook within the community and this situation can lead first and second generation children to perform less well in school (so as to not be labeled "Whites" or "turncoats") and to avoid stigmatization of being considered foreigners in their own world. These children not only reject "nerdy" and "uncool" attitudes toward school (Gibson, 1989), but also adopt linguistic patterns and behaviors of the inner city. In addition, hostile and unwelcoming environments may lead observers (teachers, community leaders, other

adults) to assume that these children will "naturally" fail and in this fashion support a self-fulfilling prophesy where the students receive less constructive feedback and less attention from the teachers.

Some authors (e.g., Burnam, Hough, Karno, Escobar, & Telles, 1987) have suggested that there is a process of selective migration among voluntary immigrants whereby the strongest ("migration of the fittest"), or the most creative and healthiest, or the risk takers or the youngest, tend to choose to migrate. This is known as the **selective migration hypothesis.** This hypothesis, if true, would argue that members of a first generation cohort would be less likely to exhibit adjustment and health problems than those belonging to a second or higher generation. Mental health research (Vega, Warheit, Buhl-Autg, & Meinhardt, 1984) shows that Mexican American immigrants have a mental health status that is similar to that of Mexicans (in Mexico) while U.S.-born Mexican Americans (second generation) exhibited poorer mental health conditions. A related **social stress hypothesis** suggests that the members of second and higher generation groups exhibit poorer mental and physical health not because they are less strong or less able to withstand acculturative stress but rather because they bear the brunt of discrimination and prejudice in our society. In addition, the social stress hypothesis endorses the assumption that immigrants are better able to maintain and use the protective cultural traditions of origin that in turn support better physical health and stronger mental health (Escobar, 1998).

Research on physical health (Nguyen, 2006; Sam, 2006) seems to shed some light on the complexity of this phenomenon. Early research (e.g., J. C. Kleinman, Fingerhut, & Prager, 1991) found that immigrant Mexican American women had rates of children with low and very low birth weight comparable to those found among White women. Furthermore, Guendelman and colleagues (Guendelman, Gould, Hudes, & Eskenazi, 1990) found that second generation Mexican American women were more likely to have low birth weight babies than first generation mothers. These results (sometimes referred to as the "Hispanic paradox" or the **"immigrant health paradox"**) seemed contradictory since immigrant mothers tended to be less educated, poorer, and to have less access to medical care. Nevertheless, subsequent research found that the improved health status does not necessarily remain consistent over time (Guendelman & English, 1995). Furthermore, more sensitive analysis of the data showed that the low birth weight phenomenon was related to a complex interaction of predictor variables such as the language ability of the mothers, their socioeconomic conditions, and their reason for migration. We could assume therefore that the explanation is more complex than at first suggested by the selective migration hypothesis or the social stress hypothesis and that the results of the acculturation process can best be explained as an interaction of multiple variables including at a minimum the

preexisting conditions (physical as well as mental status) of the immigrants, their reasons for migrating, their ability to cope with acculturative stresses, access and patterns of use of support systems, experiences of prejudice and discrimination, and characteristics of their living environment. Furthermore, as argued by Nguyen (2006), most studies have failed to properly measure the role of acculturation in explaining these findings and instead have used indicators or correlates of acculturation that may have different effects on people's behavior.
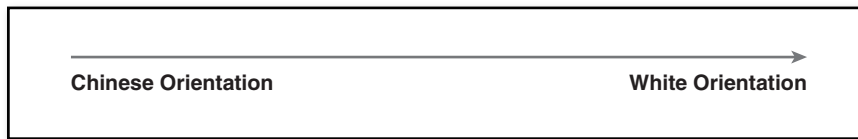
MEASURING ACCULTURATION

An understanding of the approaches used to measure acculturation is important because, in some instances, theoretical or methodological characteristics of the various measures become confounding factors when trying to analyze the findings of studies exploring the relevance of acculturation. Indeed, some of the discrepancies across studies that are found in the literature can often be explained by the limited validity in the way acculturation was defined or conceptualized by the researchers or to such methodological limitations as poorly constructed instrumentation.

The majority of procedures developed for measuring acculturation have relied on self-report paper-and-pencil instruments where individuals are asked to indicate their attitudes, norms, or values or to report on the frequency or presence of certain behaviors. For example, a large number of acculturation scales ask respondents to report how well they speak, write, or understand English and/or the language of origin. A Korean American, for example, would be asked to indicate how well she speaks Korean, usually on a Likert-type scale where responses can range from "Very Well" to "Very Poorly" or "Not at All." Another item or question could ask the respondents to report on their proficiency in English. Other acculturation scales use a single item to determine the person's proficiency in English and in Korean going from one extreme to another such as "Speak Only Korean at Home" to "Speak Only English at Home."

Most acculturation scales include a wide range of behaviors and attitudes or values and frequently are designed for one major ethnic group (e.g., Asian Americans) or for a subgroup (e.g., Vietnamese Americans or Chinese Americans). Among the behaviors often included in acculturation scales are the following: language use, preference, and fluidity; media usage patterns; ethnic friendship preferences; food consumption patterns; knowledge of cultural traditions and values; ethnic self-identification; perceived prejudice and discrimination; and cultural values or scripts such as familialism (family orientation and devotion) or time orientation (personal significance of time), or group-specific cultural scripts such as *simpatía* (value placed on positive social relations).
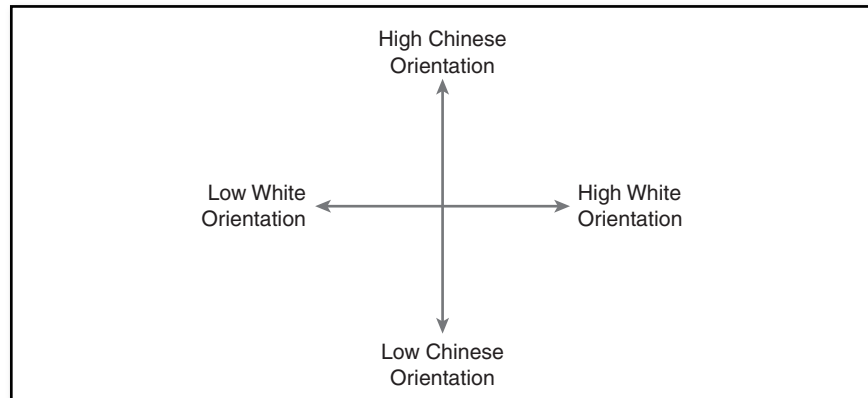
As Zane and Mak (2003) and others (e.g., Marín & Gamba, 1996) suggest, the measurement of acculturation in psychological research has varied in terms of conceptual approaches, domains measured, psychometric characteristics of the acculturation construct, and populations sampled. While some scales consider acculturation as a unidirectional process with possible responses going in one direction from the culture of origin to the new culture, others consider the process to be bidirectional and taking place in two different fields (one related to the culture of origin and another to the new culture). An acculturation scale for Chinese Americans based on a unidirectional conceptualization of acculturation, for example, would ask respondents to indicate the ethnicity of close friends in a Likert-type scale that goes from "Only White Americans" to "Only Chinese," including a midpoint of "Half White Americans and Half Chinese" (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 Acculturation as a Unidirectional Process

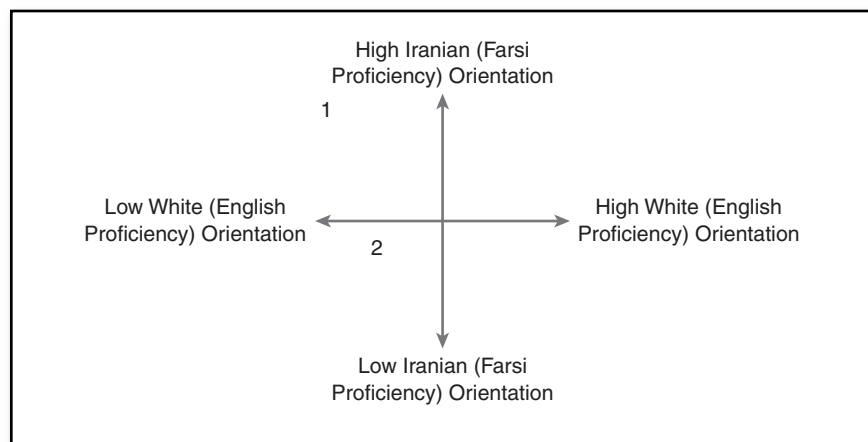
Chinese Orientation   White Orientation

The unidirectional approach to the measurement of acculturation has fallen into disfavor because it implies a zero-sum approach to culture learning (Rogler et al., 1991) whereby gains in one aspect of a culture imply losses in the related aspect of the culture of origin. For example, gains in English proficiency would imply losses in proficiency in the language of origin or, in the above example, increases in friends who are White would imply decreases in the number of Chinese friends.

Most recent research favors a multidirectional conceptualization of acculturation whereby the acculturating individual is free to move from one end to the other of each culture or "cultural field." The most significant contribution of this bidirectional or multidirectional conceptualization is that it recognizes that individuals can learn a new culture's behaviors or values without having to give up aspects of the culture of origin. For example, an Iranian American can self-report knowledge of English that can vary from "Not at All" at one extreme to "Excellent" at the other. This rating is independent of the respondent's self-reported knowledge of Farsi that also can vary from "Not at All" to "Excellent." In a 5-point Likert-type scale, the Iranian American could mark a 5 ("Excellent") for knowledge of Farsi and a 3 ("Average") for knowledge of English. In a few months, the same individual could indicate a 4 ("Good") for knowledge of English without necessarily having to indicate a lowering in his knowledge of Farsi. Figure 4.2 shows how two cultures or cultural fields would intercept each

Figure 4.2 Acculturation as a Bidirectional Process

High Chinese
Orientation

Low White
Orientation

High White
Orientation

Low Chinese
Orientation

other in an acculturating individual while Figure 4.3 shows the case of an Iranian American acculturating in an English-speaking environment.

As mentioned above, acculturation scales also vary in terms of the behavioral areas or domains that they measure. Probably the most frequently used domain is related to language proficiency, preference, and use and sometimes specifying the social context in which the language is used (Zane & Mak, 2003). Often, respondents are asked to report on linguistic preferences

Figure 4.3 Hypothetical Acculturation of an Iranian American

High Iranian (Farsi
Proficiency) Orientation

1

Low White (English
Proficiency) Orientation

2

High White (English
Proficiency) Orientation

Low Iranian (Farsi
Proficiency) Orientation

NOTE: The number 1 indicates an individual who speaks Farsi quite well but whose English is poor. The number 2 shows an Iranian American whose level of proficiency in Farsi is a little less than average and the same is true for her proficiency in English.

and proficiency in selected situations and for English as well as for the language of origin. For example, the Bidimensional Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (Marín & Gamba, 1996) asks respondents to report proficiency in English and in Spanish separately while speaking, reading, writing, listening to the radio, listening to music, and watching television (see Box 4.1).

BOX 4.1

Example of Acculturation Scale Items

Language Use Subscale

1. How often do you speak English?
2. How often do you speak in English with your friends?
3. How often do you think in English?
4. How often do you speak Spanish?
5. How often do you speak in Spanish with your friends?
6. How often do you think in Spanish?

Linguistic Proficiency Subscale

7. How well do you speak English?
8. How well do you read in English?
9. How well do you understand television programs in English?
10. How well do you understand radio programs in English?
11. How well do you write in English?
12. How well do you understand music in English?
13. How well do you speak Spanish?
14. How well do you read in Spanish?
15. How well do you understand television programs in Spanish?
16. How well do you understand radio programs in Spanish?
17. How well do you write in Spanish?
18. How well do you understand music in Spanish?

Electronic Media Subscale

19. How often do you watch television programs in English?
20. How often do you listen to radio programs in English?

(Continued)

(Continued)

21. How often do you listen to music in English?

22. How often do you watch television programs in Spanish?

23. How often do you listen to radio programs in Spanish?

24. How often do you listen to music in Spanish?

The response categories for items 1 through 6 and items 19 through 24 are Almost Always (scored as 4), Often (scored as 3), Sometimes (scored as 2), and Almost Never (scored as 1).

The response categories for items 7 through 18 are Very Well (scored as 4), Well (scored as 3), Poorly (scored as 2), and Very Poorly (scored as 1).

SOURCE: Bidimensional Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (Marín & Gamba, 1996).

Another frequently used behavioral domain involves preferences for the ethnicity of the individuals with whom one socializes. For example, the original African American Acculturation Scale (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996) included items measuring the ethnicity of friends, of people individuals feel comfortable having around them, of the person they admire the most, of the people they trust, of the members of their church, and of the neighborhood while growing up. One other type of question frequently used in acculturation scales is related to the preference that individuals report for media use including printed media such as newspapers or magazines, television programming, and radio stations (English language or mainstream outlets or ethnic-specific). Other types of questions often used to measure acculturation are knowledge of culture-specific symbols or events (e.g., the meaning of the Fourth of July holiday or the colors of the flag) or familiarity with religious or patriotic figures (e.g., who were Gandhi, Bolivar, Buddha?).

The reliance on language use and proficiency items in most acculturation scales has been criticized for a number of reasons. First is the concern that linguistic abilities or preferences are just a small, if not insignificant, aspect of a person's life and that changes may reflect the effects of various circumstances that may or may not properly measure psychological acculturation (Chiriboga, 2004). For example, schooling and job requirements may externally modify linguistic practices of immigrants and second generation individuals without necessarily reflecting internal or more personal acculturation changes. At the same time, the ethnic composition of certain neighborhoods in large urban environments (such as Miami, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco) may make it possible for older individuals to function in their language of origin without having to learn much English.

Likewise, prohibitions against use of languages other than English as those that existed in the past (and currently exist in some places of employment) may also spuriously contribute to acculturation scores that do not reflect psychological acculturation.

Furthermore, generational differences in language use have been well documented, which could reflect behavioral preferences that are not related to acculturational changes at the more basic level of values and attitudes. For example, Fishman (2000) suggested that adult immigrants continue to use the mother tongue in the majority of settings while second generation individuals tend to use it only at home with parents and other relatives who may continue to use the mother tongue. The majority of third generation individuals generally exhibit little proficiency in the heritage tongue, using the dominant language for most interactions. These patterns can therefore produce spurious correlations in acculturation scales that rely on language proficiency or preference items to measure such a fairly complex construct since there are external factors that may moderate the choice of language used. An additional limitation of most acculturation scales is the fact that they fail to ascertain or measure if the behavioral or attitudinal choices have been freely made by the individual or if they have been imposed by environmental conditions or pressures from others. For example, the choice of English-language television may be the result of an individual's personal choice or of pressures from parents to avoid television in other languages or due to the fact that there are no ethnic stations available in the place of residence. Each of these situations could have varying implications for the measurement of the individual's acculturation level.

These differences in domains, theoretical conceptualizations, and directionality contribute to the difficulties in understanding inconsistencies in psychological research dealing with acculturation among ethnic groups in the United States. Cabassa (2003) has suggested that measures of acculturation need to become more complex by increasing the number of areas that are measured so that the whole range of experiences lived by an acculturating individual can be evaluated (e.g., at home, school, work, while shopping, when accompanied by friends or alone). This is indeed a very important issue that has plagued researchers as they try to balance the need for comprehensiveness in the measure and the need for controlling the length of the instrument for practical reasons (Serrano & Anderson, 2003; Wallen, Feldman, & Anliker, 2002). Nguyen (2006) also has criticized much of current research on acculturation in the United States because of the lack of strong theoretical conceptual frameworks and the frequent lack of attention to social and structural contexts.

Despite the theoretical and methodological advantages of some approaches or scales over others, we can expect that the problem of limited comparability across measures will continue. Indeed, the last decade has seen the creation of a substantial number of acculturation scales as well as

the revision of scales that had been in existence for a few years. There are acculturation scales for the major ethnic groups including African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos as well as for specific subgroups such as Japanese Americans (Meredith, Wenger, Liu, Harada, & Kahn, 2000), Puerto Ricans (Tropp, Erkut, Coll, Alarcón, & Garcia, 1999), Khmer (Lim, Heiby, Brislin, & Griffin, 2002), Vietnamese (Nguyen & von Eye, 2002), East Asians (Barry, 2001), Southeast Asians (J. Anderson et al., 1993), Chinese Americans (Gupta & Yick, 2001), as well as Greek Americans (A. C. Harris & Verven, 1996, 1998). Also, there are some scales that have tried to measure acculturation within multicultural groups by using items that do not explicitly address a given language (e.g., Vietnamese, Spanish) or values and attitudes related to a particular culture. These scales are meant to be used in situations where it is difficult to develop group-specific acculturation scales or where the group being studied includes individuals from multiple ethnicities. Examples of these multicultural acculturation scales include the Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation Scale (Stephenson, 2000) and one developed specifically for adolescents (Unger et al., 2002). Some of the most frequently used scales are listed in Box 4.2.

BOX 4.2

Frequently Used Acculturation Scales

African American Acculturation Scales

African American Acculturation Scale (AAAS). (Landrine & Klonoff, 1994, 1995, 1996)

- Measures eight dimensions with 74 items: family structures and practices (e.g., child taking, extended family, informal adoption); socialization practices; preference for things African American (e.g., music, magazines); consumption of traditional foods (e.g., collard greens, ham hocks); health beliefs; religious beliefs and practices; belief in superstitions; and attitudes of cultural mistrust.

African American Acculturation Scale. (Snowden & Hines, 1999)

- Includes 10 items related to media preferences, ethnic/racial characteristics of friends, church congregation, neighborhood, attitudes toward interracial marriage and familial dependence, and comfort interacting with Whites.

Asian American Acculturation Scales

Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale. (Suinn, Rickard-Figueroa, Lew, & Vigil, 1987)

- A unidimensional 21-item scale measuring language use, friendship patterns, and ethnic identity.

Asian American Values Scale Multidimensional. (B. S. Kim, Li, & Ng, 2005)

- An instrument of 36 items that measures various Asian values (e.g., collectivism, humility, emotional self-control, filial piety).

Asian American Multidimensional Acculturation Scale. (Chung, Kim, & Abreu, 2004)

- A multidimensional scale with 45 items measuring cultural behavior, identity, and knowledge.

Latino Acculturation Scales

Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans-Revised (ARSMA-R). (Cuellar, Arnold, & Gonzalez, 1995)

- A bidimensional scale that measures language proficiency, linguistic preference, and ethnic identification and allows researchers to classify respondents in terms of Berry's four acculturative strategies.

Short Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (SASH). (Marín, Sabogal, Marín, Otero-Sabogal, & Pérez-Stable, 1987)

- A 12-item unidimensional scale that asks respondents to identify their level of involvement with Latino and White cultures. A language use/preference factor allows researchers to quickly classify individuals as Latino-oriented or White-oriented.

Bidimensional Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (BAS). (Marín & Gamba, 1996)

- The BAS includes 12 items for each cultural domain—Hispanic versus non-Hispanic White—that measure three acculturative areas: language use, linguistic proficiency, and patterns of use of electronic media.

Native American Acculturation Scale

Native American Acculturation Scale. (Garrett & Pichette, 2000)

- The scale includes 20 multiple-choice items addressing identity, language use, ethnicity of friends, attitudes, and behaviors.

LEVELS OF ACCULTURATION

Various authors have expressed concern regarding the fact that the literature on acculturation tends to confuse central or core aspects of acculturation from those that are less important or even peripheral to the process (Chiriboga, 2004; Marín, 1992; Zane & Mak, 2003). Indeed, changes in behavior and attitudes produced by exposure to a new culture can be observed at three different levels (Marín, 1992) depending on the length of exposure and the personal

significance of the behaviors or values. Probably the most superficial level, and therefore most easily changed, involves learning and/or forgetting facts and behaviors that are characteristic of an ethnic group or culture but have generally lower personal significance (e.g., meanings of holidays, food, and media preferences). A second more intermediate level involves changes in frequently performed behaviors that are of relative or moderate personal value or significance (e.g., language preference, ethnicity of friends). Finally, the third and most basic level involves modifications in an individual's core values (beliefs in justice, the value of the family).

For example, among Latinos, length of residence in the United States is related to changes at the superficial level such as patterns of media use. As such, Latinos who have lived the longest period of time in the United States show an increased preference for mass media in English rather than in Spanish (Alcalay et al., 1987–1988). Other studies have shown that as acculturation proceeds in terms of increased length of residence and personal involvement with a new culture, changes in areas such as linguistic proficiency as well as ethnic preferences for friends also occur (Cuellar, Arnold, & Gonzalez, 1995; Cuellar, Harris, & Jasso, 1980; Marín et al., 1987). Finally, research has shown that while changes at the more basic level of cultural and personal values occur as a result of acculturation among Latinos, they tend to be less frequent and to take more time (Cuellar et al., 1995; Sabogal et al., 1987).

Most research on acculturation has been concentrated on the first two levels, probably because of the difficulty in identifying operational definitions and developing culturally appropriate measures for basic cultural values. Indeed, the analysis by Zane and Mak (2003) of 22 frequently used acculturation scales found that only 5 included the measurement of cultural values.

It is important to note that in this age of globalization and internationalized mass media, changes related to the most superficial levels of acculturation can be the product of circumstances that have little to do with psychological acculturation. As many international travelers can note, the influence of Hollywood films and of international mass media such as the BBC, MTV, or CNN can be seen everywhere including the most remote of places. This internationalization of electronic and print mass media makes it possible for some aspects of the culture of the United States to be transmitted via movies, radio, and television programs. As such, recent immigrants to the United States can easily report familiarity with our cultural icons and events (Coca-Cola, McDonald's, KFC, Pepsi, rap music, movie actors, the Fourth of July) immediately upon arriving and before being exposed to the acculturational process of living in a new culture. This familiarity with certain cultural products may potentially modify or buffer acculturative stress among certain individuals who may find a supportive image in the product or idea that is not totally unfamiliar to them.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented an overview of acculturation as one of the most significant concepts in ethnic psychology. Acculturation has received a considerable amount of attention on the part of many researchers and is a concept or construct often mentioned when trying to predict or explain the behavior of individuals who are exposed to a new culture. Despite its relatively short history, important changes have occurred in the ways in which acculturation is defined, how it is measured, and how its effects and correlates are studied. Individuals vary in the acculturation strategies they choose and these can in turn be related to acculturative stress. The role of acculturation in shaping behaviors and attitudes is so strong that fairly clear patterns can be identified despite the variety of ethnic groups studied and the methodological limitations of some studies in terms of the measurements used or the limited samples studied.

At the same time, it is important to keep in mind the admonition proposed by some authors (e.g., Hunt, Schneider, & Comer, 2004) that, at times, acculturation has been used to explain differences in behavior or attitudes that can best be explained in terms of socioeconomic status or of the difficulties encountered by individuals who have poor English language skills, suffer poverty, or face the problems associated with being a newly arrived individual in a foreign culture.

Research has shown that individuals exposed to a new culture undergo a process of change in their worldviews, their attitudes, their values, and their behaviors and that these changes show varying patterns across individuals as a function of their migration and generational history. As Berry (2003) notes, it is important to remember that many people have undergone and continue to experience the effects of acculturation and that most have survived and have been able to function in a productive way. Acculturation therefore does not imply either social or psychological pathology despite the significant emphasis that researchers, primarily psychologists, have placed on the negative aspects of acculturation. Except for some significant work on biculturalism (as mentioned above), a substantial number of studies have primarily searched for the negative consequences of the acculturation process (Chun et al., 2003).

Key Terms

Acculturation (page 105)

Acculturative Strategy (page 110)

Acculturative Stress (page 118)

Assimilation (page 105)

Biculturalism (page 114)

Cultural Assimilation (page 103)

Dissonant Acculturation (page 117)

Downward Assimilation (page 113)

Enculturation (page 115)

Ethnogenesis (page 108)

Globalization (page 106)

Immigrant Health Paradox (page 121)

Segmented Assimilation (page 107)

Selective Migration Hypothesis (page 121)

Social Stress Hypothesis (page 121)

Structural Assimilation (page 104)

Unidirectional Model of Acculturation (page 101)

Learning by Doing

- Answer the items of the Bidimensional Acculturation Scale found in Box 4.1 and score your responses by computing an average of your responses to items dealing with English and another average for the items dealing with Spanish. Analyze the differences in both averages based on your background and exposure to Latino culture. You can compute the average for your English-related questions by adding your responses to questions 1 through 3, 7 through 12, and 19 through 21 and then dividing by 12. Your average (or mean) for the Spanish-related questions can be computed by adding your responses to the other items and dividing by 12. The range of each mean score should be between 1 and 4.

- Interview five people of varying ethnic backgrounds and ask them to indicate what practices, attitudes, and beliefs characterize their ethnic group. You can ask, for example, about dating practices, who makes financial decisions at home, attitudes about women working outside the house, religious practices, the role of adults toward their aging parents, how involved are men in child rearing, and whether men cook. Find out if grandparents and parents held or hold the same beliefs and carried or carry out the same practices.

- Interview first and second generation immigrants and have them report on preferred language use in various settings and explore the role of external factors in shaping those preferences or practices. For example, ask which language they prefer at home, with their parents, with their children, at religious services, when watching television or movies.

- Imagine that you are about to move permanently to a new city where you do not speak the language. Make a list of the things you would need to do within the first five days in order to have a life that resembles your current conditions. Rate how stressful (on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the highest level of stress) achieving each of those outcomes would be to you. Consider, for example, renting an apartment, getting a telephone line installed, registering for school, managing the public transport system, buying groceries when you cannot read the labels, opening a bank account, buying stamps, getting a driver's license, getting a government-issued identification card, learning what is appropriate to wear when going to school or looking for a job or when going to a party.

Suggested Further Readings

Berry, J. W. (2003). Conceptual approaches to acculturation. In K. M. Chun, P. Balls Organista, & G. Marín (Eds.), *Acculturation: Advances in theory, measurement, and applied research* (pp. 17–37). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

A comprehensive and updated overview of Berry's acculturation model and his perspectives on the model's implications.

Chun, K. M., Balls Organista, P., & Marín, G. (Eds.). (2003). *Acculturation: Advances in theory, measurement, and applied research.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

This book presents comprehensive summaries and analyses of current perspectives on acculturation theories and their applications. The book includes contributions by some of the key contributors to our understanding of this complex process among ethnic minority groups in the United States.

Jacoby, T. (Ed.). (2004). *Reinventing the melting pot: The new immigrants and what it means to be American.* New York: Basic Books.

An excellent and contemporary analysis of the processes and difficulties facing recent immigrants to the United States. The book analyzes various models of acculturation and social integration within the older perspectives of assimilation.

LaFromboise, T., Coleman, H. L. K., & Gerton, J. (1993). Psychological impact of biculturalism: Evidence and theory. *Psychological Bulletin, 114,* 395–412.

A classic article on the effects of biculturalism that shows the positive results of learning more than one culture.

Padilla, A. M. (Ed.). (1980). *Acculturation: Theory, models, and some new findings.* Boulder, CO: Westview.

This book presents a number of acculturation models and their implications for Latino families. A classic in the field.

Root, M. P. P. (1992). *Racially mixed people in America.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

One of the first books to advocate for the need for social scientists to focus on the social and psychological characteristics of individuals of multiple ethnic backgrounds. The book presents a comprehensive overview of early research in the field.

Root, M. P. P. (1996). *The multiracial experience: Racial borders as the new frontier.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

This book updates the previous book by the same author and identifies important areas of research as the nation becomes more multiracial and multiethnic.

Rumbaut, R. G., & Portes, A. (Eds.). (2001). *Ethnicities: Children of immigrants in America.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

An important analysis of the experiences and characteristics of second generation individuals (the children of immigrants) primarily from sociological and anthropological perspectives. The book is based on the researcher's comprehensive studies of immigrants to the United States.

Sam, D. L., & Berry, J. W. (Eds.). (2006). *The Cambridge handbook of acculturation psychology.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

An international collection of chapters analyzing research and theoretical perspectives on acculturation. The book benefits from the authors' experiences around the world in countries and among individuals who differ in their migration patterns and acculturational perspectives.