Chapter 14
Acculturation's Influence on the Relationships, Identity, and Well-Being in Immigrant Adolescents

Maling Marino
Baylor University, USA

Barbara Purdum-Cassidy
Baylor University, USA

Kevin Scott
Baylor University, USA

ABSTRACT

Immigrant adolescents entering the United States for the first time experience much stress. To alleviate the effects of acculturative stress, immigrant adolescents adopted one of four acculturative strategies: integration, assimilation, separation, or marginalization. The strategy they adopt influences their social relationships with others, their identity, and their well-being. The authors used a qualitative single-case study. The four participants included three males and one female attending a local middle school. Data collection consisted of two semi-structured interviews and two observations of each participant in their classes. The data analysis found seven themes: entering a new country; adjusting to the language barrier and learning a new language; maintaining family relationships; school relationships influenced acculturation; the overall acculturative experience influenced a sense of well-being and identity; students who integrated or assimilated experienced better acculturation; and students who marginalized or separated experienced lower-than-

expected acculturation.

Acculturation and the need to acculturate influence immigrant adolescents in many ways. It affects their social relationships with their peers and family, their sense of identity, and their sense of overall well-being. Moving to a new country and trying to fit in is stressful. It is also stressful when the native and host cultures do not match. It is even more stressful when immigrant adolescents enter into an entirely new school system without any social support and must figure out how to blend in with their new school-age peers. To relieve the stress of entering a new country and culture, immigrant adolescents must acculturate using one of four strategies: integration, separation, assimilation, or marginalization (Berry 2005; 2019; Berry et al., 2010) to decide which of the two cultures they want to identify and interact with. Contingent upon which strategy they choose, immigrant adolescents can experience positive or negative outcomes from acculturation.

This chapter argues that acculturation and acculturative stress influence the social relationships, sense of identity, and sense of well-being in newly arrived immigrant adolescents. Contingent upon which of Berry's (2005; 2019; Berry et al., 2010) four strategies they adopt, their decision impacts their peer relationships (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2009; Fang et al., 2016; Khawaja et al., 2018; Shin et al., 2007), family relationships (American Psychological Association, 2012; Baptiste, 1993; Bekteshi & van Hook, 2015; Osman et al., 2020; Santiago et al., 2014; Trickett & Jones, 2007), as well as their identity and well-being. This chapter unfolds in five steps. First, it details Berry's (2005; 2019; Berry et al., 2010) four acculturative strategies and their characteristics. Second, four stories of newly arrived immigrant adolescents detail their individual experiences with acculturation. Third, this chapter explains how acculturation influences the social relationships of newly arrived immigrant adolescents. Fourth, this chapter describes how each of the four acculturative strategies influences immigrant adolescents' sense of identity. Fifth, this chapter explains how acculturation influences their overall sense of well-being.

BERRY'S FOUR ACCULTURATIVE STRATEGIES

Acculturation is a process that involves the social and cultural aspects of each individual and how it affects them. Berry (2019) defines acculturation as "the process of cultural and psychological change that takes place because of the contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members" (p. 10). It affects students' perceptions of themselves, especially when creating their own identities. Middle school is the time in students' lives when they begin to develop their personalities and identities (French et al., 2006; Katsiaficas et al., 2013; Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2007). They become more independent and aware of who they are and

Related Content

What Trauma Does to My Body: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Physical Activity
Ana Filipa Pinheiro Gomes (2024). *Combining Exercise and Psychotherapy to Treat Mental Health (pp. 89-113).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/what-trauma-does-to-my-body/334579

A Multi-Level Approach to Burnout Prevention: Strategies for a Sustainable and Thriving Workforce
Prerna Mehta (2025). *Prioritizing Employee Mental Health and Well-Being for Organizational Success (pp. 219-248).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/a-multi-level-approach-to-burnout-prevention/377942

Prioritizing Employee Psychological Well-Being: A Practical Guide to Organizational Sustainability
Bhupinder Singh, Saurabh Chandraand Kittisak Wongmahesak (2025). *Prioritizing Employee Mental Health and Well-Being for Organizational Success (pp. 55-72).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/prioritizing-employee-psychological-well-being/377936

Drug and Alcohol Use Among Blacks: Mental Health Implications
Gracie Brownell (2023). *Changing the Stigma of Mental Health Among African Americans: Moving From Denial to Acceptance (pp. 252-282).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/drug-and-alcohol-use-among-blacks/330779

Students Wellbeing and Performance in Higher Education Institutions
Amrik Singh (2024). *Factors Impacting Student Well-Being and Coping Tactics (pp. 1-12).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/students-wellbeing-and-performance-in-higher-education-institutions/354969