

**Expanding Our Understanding of Post-Migration Cultural Adjustment: Research-
Informed Adaptation Strategies and Therapeutic Approaches**

By

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Abstract

This research paper addresses the complexities of the cultural adaptation process for newcomers to Western countries through a critical examination of the three clusters of acculturation models. A review of the unidimensional assimilation model points to its increasing inadequacy in understanding the acculturation of newcomers from diverse backgrounds. John Berry's bidimensional acculturation model, particularly the integration strategy (or successful navigation of two cultures), has been shown to benefit individual well-being, psychological health, and cultural adaptation. However, criticism of Berry's model points to its failure to account for social, contextual, individual, and cultural variants that deeply affect integration. This leads to the theoretical inclusion of multidimensional perspectives that consider factors such as social reception context, discrimination, multicultural personality traits, goal setting and motivation, cultural distance, and the role of social networks. The paper also discusses variations of domain-specific integration, an approach that allows for newcomers to navigate across different spheres of life (public, social, personal) according to situational demands and personal benefits rather than acculturating strategies. Utilizing theoretical and empirical research, this paper offers a deeper understanding of the acculturation experience and provides practical guidelines and recommendations for culturally sensitive, multidimensional therapeutic approach. The significance of this research is underscored by future trends indicating an upward trajectory in global Western migration and immigration to Canada. Particularly as Canadian projections indicate that it aims to grow its population, stimulate economic growth, and fulfill humanitarian commitments with foreign migration, making the subject of acculturation increasingly relevant.

Keywords: acculturation, cultural adaptation, unidimensional assimilation model, bidimensional acculturation model, integration strategy, multidimensional acculturation perspectives, social

reception context, multicultural personality traits, goal setting, cultural distance, domain-specific integration.

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Chapter One: Introduction

“In some ways, the immigrant experience is like the dizzying journey taken by the lead character in Lewis Carroll's 19th-century novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*”

(The Immigrant Experience, n.d.).

Overview of the Topic

It is undisputed that relocating to a new country presents numerous economic, social, psychological, and linguistic challenges (Berry, 1997). The surprising and unsettling nature of adjusting to a new culture can be easily likened to Alice’s adventures in Lewis Carroll’s fairy tale. Cultural adaptation, or acculturation, often involves confusion from the illogical aspects of the new environment, disorientation from unfamiliar rules and norms, conversations that feel out of context, and uncontrollable changes to one's identity, among many other unusual experiences. To properly begin a discussion of cultural adaptation, it is important to review the origin of the concept, as well as associated definitions and meanings.

Definition of Acculturation

A group of anthropologists, nearly a century ago, were among the first to describe acculturation as a change of cultural patterns within, one or both, ethnographic groups when they directly and continuously interact with each other (Redfield et al., 1936). This depiction was the earliest modern account of acculturation, which laid the foundation for how it is theorized today. Schwartz et al. (2010) suggested that acculturation is a complex process involving the integration of heritage and receiving culture practices, values, and identification with them.

Acculturation has been studied from various perspectives, including how this psychological and sociocultural adjustment affects individual’s identity (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013) and what impact it has on the physical and psychological health (McDonald &

Kennedy, 2004). However, as theoretical discussions have expanded, the concept of acculturation has become generalized, often leading to a vague understanding that equates it with full assimilation into the host culture or "Americanization" (Escobar & Vega, 2000).

Individual Experiences of Cultural Adaptation

During acculturation, significant internal changes are likely to occur in a person best identified as change of cultural identity. Yoon and colleagues (2011) described it as a multidimensional process that causes changes in such domains of one's life as social and cultural values, customs, beliefs and attitudes, personal identity, relationships with others, and ethnic pride. These changes are easier if the home culture is close to the host cultural background. Cultural proximity is determined when there are shared linguistic, ethnic, religious, historical and geographical similarities between cultures (Gertsen, 1990). Otherwise, if cultural values are vastly different, it can result in significant disparities between host societies and migrants; for example, when migrants from collectivist cultures struggle with Western adaptation, because their ethnic values are based on prioritizing religious or familial well-being over personal needs and aspirations (Schwartz et al., 2010). Strong cultural differences may result in newcomers feeling disorientation (Potosky, 2016), experiencing overwhelmed due to homesickness and social isolation (Johnson & Sandhu, 2007), navigating struggles with unfamiliar institutional environments and completing necessary procedural aspects (Dabic et al., 2020; Walsh and Martin, 2021) even years after resettlement. These extreme changes to the physical, cultural, and social surroundings trigger acculturative stress responses that can manifest in higher sensitivity to socially distressing events (Lu et al., 2020); anxiety, depression, PTSD (Carta, Bernal, Hardoy, & Haro-Abad, 2005; Merikangas & Kalaydjian, 2007).

Cultural Adaptation Stages

Cultural adaptation process has been described by different models, but is generally understood through the lens of adjustment stages, first described by Oberg (1960). They include the *honeymoon* stage characterized by first fascination, excitement and enthusiasm. The *crisis* stage, better known as *cultures shock*, sets in after several months of interacting with different values and language, producing feelings of frustration, irritation, loss and anxiety or even anger and rejection. As newcomers begin learning and understanding the language and culture, they progress into *recovery* stage. Finally, *adjustment stage* is characterized by lessened instances of anxiety and acceptance of cultural differences and even appreciation of new values. The level of culture shock experienced will determine how well the adjustment process will unfold or if the newcomer gets stuck unable to resolve and integrate the cultural differences. As adjustment intensifies, cultural competence grows.

Migration and Acculturation

While all newcomers experience similar challenges of cross-cultural adaptation to the new society, their migration journey towards relocation and resettlement can begin under vastly different circumstances. A first and broad distinction is whether newcomer is a *voluntary* or *forced* migrant or a *temporary sojourner* (student, seasonal worker, temporary professional). Migrants who move due to economic opportunities, social misalignment, educational aspirations, family reunifications, and political factors generally are deemed as *voluntary* (or immigrants); while those who move for safety and security reasons, fleeing war or political oppression, climate and environmental disasters, human rights violations, and poverty are considered *forced* migrants (or refugees and asylum seekers) (Nations, U., n.d.; Malm, 2021). However, Bakewell (2021) showed skepticism whether these archetypes accurately reflect the forces of departure and has questioned if any migration can truly be voluntary; instead, proposing a terminology of *life-*

changing or *life-threatening* drivers. To streamline the settlement and acculturation discussion, terms like *migrants* or *newcomers* are used interchangeably when referring to newly arrived individuals regardless of their resettlement circumstances.

Migration reasons have a direct impact on acculturation adjustment and mental wellbeing. On the individual level, migration reasons (forced or voluntary) will impact acculturation, because a migrant's ethnic norms and beliefs will be one's primary influence on how to act in the new setting. On the societal level, the way a newcomer is identified, perceived and accepted by the host majority group is shaped by the formal status and legal rights granted by the local authorities (refugee, temporary worker, asylum seeker, economic immigrant, student), along with the colloquial social and political attitudes (Bakewell, 2021; Bhugra et al., 2021). Furthermore, Bakewell noted that newcomer's immediate relationship with the new society will be undermined by the local assumptions and stereotypes attached to his or her reasons for relocating and the particular expectations of their behavior. For example, if migrants are perceived to add cultural or economic value to the receiving country (as voluntary migrants or highly skilled professionals) they may be received warmly; on the contrary individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (forced or illegal migrants) may be seen as burdens to the country's resources (Steiner, 2009), and potentially face discrimination (Louis et al., 2007). Experiences of discrimination and rejection negatively impact the process of acculturation (Rumbaut, 2009). Therefore, the course of migrant's social trajectory, or more precisely - cultural adaptation is controlled by the levels of hostility in the public opinion, particularly if newcomers are perceived as threats to the economy, security, or collective identity of the majority.

Global Migration - Statistical Trends and Projections

Issues around acculturation are becoming increasingly important in the face of global migration changes. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2023), 2022 was the record year for the largest increase and the highest number of forcibly displaced people at 108.4 million (Siegfried, 2023). At the same time global asylum claims rose 18% to 5.4 million new applications (UNHCR, 2023). Along with the scientific agreement on the increasing threats from climate change, the number of climate migrants is expected to grow exponentially by 2050; with the surge forecasted to reach as high as 1.2 billion people being globally displaced due to climate and natural disasters (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2020).

Western, developed, advanced-economy countries have been and will remain as most desired destinations for immigrants and refugees. According to Pew Research Centre's analysis of United Nations 2020 data on international migrants, just over half of the world's re-settlers (145.4 out of 281 million) landed in Europe and North America (Natarajan et al., n.d.). Results of the latest 2021 Gallup poll showed that nearly 900 million people worldwide expressed a strong desire to permanently migrate, 48 percent of which indicated their preference for either European or North American countries (Inc, 2023).

Migration into Canada - Statistical Trends and Projections

In advanced economies, like Canada, immigrants make up nearly 12% of the population (Dept, I. M. F. R., 2020), in Canada it is 23.0% or 8.3 million people as of 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2022). By 2050, the growth of immigration in advanced economies is projected to increase to 16% (Dept, I. M. F. R., 2020); in contrast by 2041 Canadian first-generation immigrants will represent 34% of the total population (Statistics Canada, 2022a). There are three major factors that will play significant role in the number of migrants expected to arrive in Canada in the foreseeable future. Utilizing human immigration Canadian government intends to

replace and grow the declining population levels, stimulate the fiscal budget and economic output, and fulfill Canada's international commitment to respond to humanitarian crises across the globe as outlined below.

Population Growth – Immigration Not Fertility

Canadian population is rapidly aging with record-lowest 2023 fertility rates of 4% (births over death) (Statistics Canada, 2023). These below replacement levels force the other 96% of population growth to be sourced from immigrants. By 2032 100% of Canada's population growth will be accounted by immigration (Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada, 2023).

National Economic Growth

For market-based economies, like Canada, migrant influx can lift labour markets, contribute to the growth of the fiscal budgets, and increase local productivity (Mosler Vidal, 2023). In Canada almost 100% of labour growth is provided by economic immigration and will continue to be a prioritized mechanism of addressing labor shortages (IRCC, 2023). In economic output, every 1% increase in immigration boosts gross domestic product by 2%, providing an important economic acceleration (Mosler Vidal, 2023). Finally Canadian economy is now deeply tied to international education (Scott et al., 2015) by receiving a significant contribution of \$15.4 billion (per 2020 data) from international students. Most of whom are desirable candidates for permanent residency (Scott et al., 2015) and are given a streamlined path towards it (IRCC, 2023). Furthermore, scientific or agricultural labor needs are always satisfied with foreign worker influx.

Commitment to Humanitarianism

Along with seizing social and economic opportunities of immigration, Canadian government is also committed to remaining a global leader in responding to the complex

humanitarian emergencies through their robust immigration system and laws (IRCC, 2023). In 2022 91,735 asylum applications were processed by the government (IRCC 2022), 10,199 newcomers were admitted on humanitarian and compassionate grounds and 46,528 refugees were welcomed (IRCC, 2023).

Purpose Statement

The cultural adaptation and acculturation subjects of this paper will retain its relevance and significance to the professionals in cross-cultural psychology, sociology and those working with all types of migrants and newcomers in social, civil, and immigration services as well as medical professions. Statistical data presented above further confirms these assertions considering the sizable future influx of migrants who will be undergoing cross-cultural adaptation to Canada. While research on the mental health concerns of immigrants is contradictory, with past studies suggesting that immigrants generally arrive in Canada with better self-perceived mental health than Canadians (Salami, 2017), George et al., (2015) confirmed that immigrants in Canada are more likely to experience mental health concerns contributed by acculturation related stressors, ethnic discrimination and other adjustment difficulties. These factors may account for the decline in immigrants' mental health as their stay in Canada progresses as confirmed in the studies of Salami (2017).

Contribution to the Field

By not sharing the immigration and acculturation experiences with their clients, North American counsellors may struggle by not being equipped to adequately and without bias address acculturation difficulties in therapy. Despite numerous theories on cultural adaptation, as reviewed in the next section, there is a significant lack of both a multidimensional acculturation model (Bierwiazzonek and Kunst, 2021) and comprehensive practical guidelines for cultural

competency development (Leong & Wong, 2003). This lack of guidance and recommendations is partly due to a myriad of cultural diversity amidst newcomer population (Chu et al., 2016) and partly due to most studies being conducted in North America with a lacking greater diversity in the migrant samples (Leong & Wong, 2003). This paper aims to contribute to the field of psychology by identifying a variety of perspectives that should be considered as part of a multidimensional integration theory and providing therapeutic recommendations based on these perspectives.

The main purpose of this research is to help readers improve their understanding of migration experience, expand their knowledge on the models in cross-cultural adjustment and summarize best empirical approaches in acculturation. Utilizing the latest research, the most prominent acculturation models, strategies of engaging with new cultural context and the effect they may have on the newcomer will be reviewed.

The research is centered on exploring the following questions:

1. How do theoretical frameworks on acculturation inform our understanding and reflect the conditions of newcomers during acculturation process? What are the most significant factors in the cultural adaptation process that influence the acculturation strategies a newcomer will choose (or be compelled to choose)?
2. What knowledge and interventions are valuable for counselors to effectively and culturally sensitively address the challenges of cultural integration faced by migrants?

Scope and Assumptions

The paper's scope is limited to considerable but not extensive exploration of such concepts as acculturation theories and strategies, biculturalism and cultural integration, integration including how personal, social and environmental factors affect it. These concepts

are examined from a multicultural perspective in order to provide culturally sensitive ways of working with new Canadian clients in therapy. In addition, acculturation is a multifaceted process that is mitigated by a variety of variables, many of which are not reviewed in this paper. These include language proficiency, individual demographics, lengths of stay, employment status extended family proximity, pre-and-post-traumatization (Berry & Hou, 2016), acculturative stress (Berry, 1980). No distinction is made on how different ethnic and cultural backgrounds may affect integration process. Finally, the terms “newcomer,” “migrant,” “settler,” “immigrant,” and “new Canadian” are used interchangeably in this paper, but cover the experiences of immigrants, permanent residents, refugees, accompanying family members, sojourners, temporary workers or students. All of whom are likely to be undergoing a similar process of cultural adjustment.

Reflectivity and Positionality Statement

It is important to acknowledge that evidence selection in my research presentation may be affected by my personal experience of voluntary immigration and cultural adaptation in three different countries. The viewpoints and perspectives I selected align with my own actual or preferred experiences and assessment of acculturation, potentially emphasizing challenges and barriers over opportunities and positive outcomes. My interpretation of data and findings, as well as conclusions drawn, were influenced by my personal acculturation challenges. To address subjective analysis and biases, I dedicated more time to analyzing and investigating opposing research. Leading to presenting conflicting evidence and alternative viewpoints that challenge a chosen observations or framework to make arguments more balanced. However, when navigating a literary sea of research and publications, it is unlikely all available theoretical perspectives and empirical studies were reviewed, leaving room for gaps or exclusions.

Personal Experience and Interest in the Subject

The area of cultural adjustment has been both deeply personal and theoretically underexplored for me. Writing this paper holds multiple meanings from paying homage to several of my own cross-cultural adaptations, expanding mine and others' understanding of what forces affect a migrant's cultural adjustment, and most importantly to compile researched approaches which would be paramount in helping to address the cultural challenges in therapy.

I gained my first solo immigration experience as a teenager to the United States, the second one in my late twenties when relocating to Canada, and after a decade with a recent move to England. While in time I certainly have achieved a degree of cultural fluency in the Western values, some of the North American approaches to life, work, unspoken rules of social engagement, and cultural expectations clashed with my Ukrainian ethnic cultural principles. Such individualistic concepts like assertiveness, proactive conflict resolution, priding one's accomplishments, disclosing very conservatively about one's emotional experiences, maintaining physical and emotional distance, and forward extraverted engagement with strangers were foreign to me coming from a group-oriented society. Lack of comfort around these standards combined with my native collectivist value of placing importance on group perception, personal view of my immigrant status as somewhat socially inferior became fundamental reservations for my behavior in the social, professional, and educational environments abroad.

Definition of Terms

Acculturation

“A process of cultural and psychological change that results from the continuing contact between people of different cultural backgrounds,” which includes adaptation of values, beliefs, customs and social norms of the receiving society. (Berry, 2006, p. 27)

Assimilation

One possible outcome of acculturation, referring to one of four acculturation strategies. It is a complete adaptation of the cultural norms, values, and behaviors of the dominant culture, which can lead to diminished original identity due to loss of ethnic cultural practices for migrants. (Berry, 1980)

Bicultural Identity

Characterized by individual's ability to maintain a complex and stable sense of self after integrating different heritage and dominant (host) cultural aspects by reconciling the conflicting values, norms, and practices. (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002)

Biculturalism

Refers the process of functionally incorporating elements of different cultures. (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002)

Bidimensional Acculturation Models

A theoretical framework that conceptualizes acculturation as a process of navigating two dimensions: heritage culture maintenance and host culture adoption, resulting in multiple outcomes depending on the combination of cultural affiliations. (Berry, 1997)

Cultural Adaptation (Adjustment)

See Acculturation.

Cultural Competence

Defined as ability to appreciate, understand, and engage effectively with individual from diverse cultural backgrounds by acquiring and applying knowledge about other cultures and cultivating respect for the differences. (Sue, 2006)

Cultural Distance (inverse proximity)

Describes the degree of dissimilarity between cultures by encompassing such dimension as language, religious beliefs, history and tradition, geography, social norms, and values.

(Hofstede, 1980)

Cultural Frame Switching

The ability to comfortably alternate between different cultural views, attitudes, values, and behaviors by catering them to specific cultural contexts and environments for the purpose of situational adaptation. (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002)

Culture

“Comprised of the norms, values, beliefs, information, and skills that people in a society share, and manifest in the visible behaviors, physical implements and social systems that the society expresses. Thus, different nations and ethnic groups have different languages, laws, religions, gender roles, manners, foods, clothes, architecture, etc. cultural norms define and regulate social roles and social situations.” (Rudmin, 2003a)

Domain-Specific Integration

Refers to a type of acculturation strategy, where behaviors are adopted according to the specific demands of different domains of individual functioning (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2004). This approach involves rotating and interchanging acculturation strategies based on the professional, social, and domestic situational contexts. (Navas et al., 2007)

Integration (Strategy)

One possible outcome of acculturation, referring to one of four acculturation strategies. It involves maintaining cultural heritage while also engaging with and adopting aspects of the new cultures. (Berry, 1997)

Integration Hypothesis

Was first proposed by Berry (1997), asserting that it is the most favorable and successful acculturation strategy for sociocultural and psychological adaptation.

Multicultural Personality Traits

Are individual traits that promote successful cultural adaptation and enable newcomers to accept cultural diversity, emphasize with other cultural viewpoints and remain flexible in adopting various cultural norms. These traits include social initiative, emotional stability, open mindedness, cultural empathy, and flexibility. (Van der Zee and van Oudenhoven, 2022)

Unidimensional Assimilation Model

A theoretical framework conceptualizing acculturation as a linear, one-directional process of newcomers abandoning their original ethnic culture and increasing adaptation of the new host culture values. (Gordon, 1964)

Outline of the Next Chapters

Thus far in the paper, I have introduction to the tenets of the acculturation process, affirmed its future social and counselling relevance, and provided my literary perspective on reviewing and presenting the research. In Chapter 2, I examine theoretical models of acculturation and cultural adaptation literature to establish how well the models serve in explaining cultural integration. Understanding the history and variety of acculturation models is crucial for counselors in gain a holistic view of acculturation theory, contexts, and mitigating factors. In the final section, Chapter 3, I discuss the application of research, offering practical recommendations for counsellors. They are presented to help counsellors deliver tailored, culturally sensitive, effective interventions, avoiding stereotypic assumptions and using comprehensive approaches that adhere to ethical standards, empower clients, and improve mental health outcomes.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this literature review two types of acculturation models are outlined, as proposed by nearly a century of studies and research. The models are presented in chronological order, starting with a one-dimensional perspective of acculturation, followed by the prevalent two-dimensional approach. The strategy of two-dimensional model is identified as most functional and best supported by research evidence for cultural integration. However, by identifying model shortcomings, this review proposes supplementing the existing framework with other perspectives and strongly incorporating moderating factors to better understand the process of acculturation.

Presenting the models historically not only traces the evolution of acculturation theory, but also allows the reader to track the obsolete, but still socially prevalent, ways of understanding cultural adaptation. This format also exhibits how model weaknesses can be addressed with new insights and theories, but also reflects how modern migration and settlement circumstances demand new approaches.

Historic Account of Migration and Acculturation

Movement, relocation and resettlement, followed by adjustment to new environment and culture, may seem like an increasing post-globalization phenomenon, but it has been part of human existence since the dawn of time (Rudmin, 2009). Migration provided means for securing food, physical and environmental safety; facilitating procreation; promoting trade and religion, expanding learning and urbanization; and even expanding the slave trade. The cultural infusion that came with migration has not always been viewed positively. Plato (ca. 375 B.C.E./1961) himself was the first to write about the dangers of travelers introducing new ideas that can disturb local customs and lead to confusion of manners, concluding that cultural

contamination of society can become problematic to the well-governed states. This fear and resistance to changes of cultural and social patterns are present in the populist and political discourse today in the US (Davies, 2009), Europe (Lesinska, 2014) and Canada (Berry, 2009). Historically, these notions set the expectation for migrants to completely and gratefully assimilate into their new homelands and abandon native ethnicity. Early research and scientific assessments also mirrored these social perceptions, viewing integration as solely the newcomer's burden to adjust to the new society.

Unidimensional (one-dimensional) Assimilation Model

By formulating the first acculturation model, Gordon (1964) proposed that post-migration settlement success was entirely dependent upon one's complete structural identification and behavioral assimilation with the new society. The model was formulated based on the accounts and observations of the 19th and early 20th-century European immigrants coming to the United States, who upon their arrival lacked both the knowledge of American culture and the language (Van De Vijver, 2015). Historically, immigrants and indigenous populations were unfairly characterized by such stereotypes as ignorant, unhygienic, predisposed to diseases, or with attributes of criminal and insanity, giving life to the superior beliefs that assimilating these groups into Anglo-Saxon cultural norms would alleviate these alleged problems (Rudmin, 2009).

The process of assimilation entailed gradual, linear distancing from one's ethnic cultural practices, beliefs and values to eventual replacement them with the new ones in order to fully integrate into the new social groups and institutions, as was expected by the receiving group. Through the loss of native language and loosening of ethnic cultural ties (but not religious) followed eventual complete adjustment or Americanization of immigrants.

Robert Park's melting-pot sociological theory describes this style of full cultural immersion through the three stages of: *contact* with the new culture, which forces *accommodation* to it to minimize conflict and eventually leading to *assimilation* with the dominant culture (Persons, 1987). While Park's three-stage model lies at the heart of the unidimensional assimilation perspective, it also continues to serve as a foundational concept in the general public's understanding of how newcomers adapt (or should do so) to the host culture even today (Padilla & Perez, 2003). However, with the main variables of acculturation success deemed as immigration age and duration of residence in the new country, today Gordon's (1964) assimilation model appears incomplete or possibly misleading, failing to consider other influential factors like individual differences (personality, preferences, resources) and frictions between ethnic community vs. mainstream cultures (Ryder et al., 2000). Finally, because the one-dimensional model was mostly based on studies of European immigrants, who's race and culture were not too dissimilar to the American, the model is limited in capturing the acculturation experiences of current newcomers from vast culturally diverse backgrounds (Sirin & Sin, 2023).

Bidimensional (two-dimensional) Acculturation Model

By the 1980s, researchers noticed that immigrants were retaining their traditional cultural ties, including religion and language. This recognition highlighted that connections with both cultures could be maintained simultaneously, contrasting the unidimensional perspective (Yoon et al., 2020). Individual values tend to be more resistant to change during intercultural contact; therefore, new perspectives needed to account for how newcomers choose to incorporate different cultural elements (Padilla & Perez, 2003). Consequently, bidimensional frameworks (Berry, 1980; Mendoza & Martinez, 1981) emerged to better understand the degree of involvement between heritage and host cultures during cultural adaptation.

The most influential and widely used framework to understand the process of cultural immersion is the acculturation model developed by Canadian psychologist John W. Berry (1980). Berry proposed that when individuals encounter a new cultural context, they reassess how valuable it is to maintain their ethnic culture versus adapting to the new one. During this process, newcomers undergo psychological, socio-cultural adjustment and can experience distinct types of belonging or engagement with their ethnic culture and new host society to manage stress and cope. The significance of Berry's model was in recognizing the minority group perspective, multiculturalism, and accounting for more of individual preference in maintenance of ethnic and acquisition of dominant cultural orientations (Padilla & Perez, 2003).

Berry's Acculturation Strategies

The model reflects four acculturation strategies used by immigrants (Berry, 1980): *assimilation* (exhibiting the strongest belonging to the host culture), *separation* (greater belonging to the ethnic culture), and *marginalization* (low sense of belonging to either culture), and *integration* (the highest sense of belonging to both ethnic and new cultures).

With assimilation, an individual makes a behavioral shift to minimize or abandon association with their heritage culture, by giving preference to adopting foreign customs, values, and social behaviors (Berry, 1997). In this process, similar to one-dimensional model, as the cultural differences begin to disappear, the individual may lose their cultural identity (Bhugra et al., 2021). While this strategy is correlated with a higher life satisfaction, it is associated with lower levels of mental health, indicating that the heritage culture may significantly account for providing coping strategies and mental protection to negative life outcomes (Berry & Hou, 2016). The danger of assimilation is that it is underlined with expectations for individuals to undergo personal loss by changing their appearance, culture, and overall presentation to conform

to the majority society's approved behaviors, self-expression, and values, all to appear safe and non-threatening through “mask-wearing.”

Separation is characterized by retaining closer and distinct identification with the ethnic culture and avoiding assimilation with the new traditions and values (Berry, 1997). This resistant approach to greater engagement with the larger society led to lower life satisfaction and well-being, but interestingly better mental health (Berry & Hou, 2016). Although this indicates that heritage culture may provide strong coping resources, separation is likely to result in challenges functioning in the new environment, accompanied with difficulties in forming local relationships and accessing resources. Especially since participants in Berry and Hou’s study also reported facing more discrimination when they exhibited separation attitudes.

Marginalization is typically viewed as an unsuccessful and least adaptive strategy involving disconnection and alienation from either cultural realm (Berry, 1997). By disassociating from both cultures, migrants may experience a void in identity by not being part of either social group, which can contribute to depressive symptoms (Mossakowski, 2003), decreased psychological well-being and negative sociocultural adjustment (Berry & Hou, 2019; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). With the absence of adequate social support and cultural belonging a sense of isolation and helplessness can quickly set in, exacerbating mental health issues. Choy et al. (2021) systematically reviewed 21 studies confirming that marginalization is associated with the worst mental health effects, worse depressive symptoms and more than tripled anxiety symptoms comparing to integration strategy. These outcomes are likely due to lack of supportive networks and dislocation from cultural anchors, which support individuals in navigating and coping with the stresses of a new environment, leading to increased vulnerability and psychological distress.

Integration is described in literature as the process of effectively engaging with and incorporating aspects of both ethnic and host values, leading to successfully functioning in diverse cultural settings and development of bi-cultural identity (Ferrari et al., 2019). It is considered the most adaptive and beneficial acculturation strategy. Berry & Hou's (2016) research indicates that immigrants using integration have the highest scores of life satisfaction and mental health. Following research on the benefits of integration strategy, Berry (1997) formed "integration hypothesis," suggesting that maintaining dual cultural ties leads to the most effective and functional way for immigrants to acculturate.

Integration Hypothesis or Biculturalism

According to the integration hypothesis, also referred to as biculturalism (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013; Schwartz et al., 2017), integration strategy offers highest levels of personal well-being (Cohen-Louck & Shechory-Bitton (2021) and positive effects on mental health (Choy et al., 2021). It also improves psychological adaptation (self-esteem, life satisfaction, decrease in depression, anxiety, psychological distress) (Yoon et al., 2013) and best sociocultural adjustment (enhanced cultural competency) (Ward & Kennedy, 1994; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013). Biculturalism can aid newcomers solidify their cultural identity as they gain understanding and familiarity with the new culture through diverse experiences of engaging (Berry, 2016). Some form of integration has been preferred by most newcomers (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2004; Piontkowski et al., 2002; Snauwaert et al., 2003).

However, due to its popularity integration hypothesis concept may have become overly simplified. To ensure clarity, it is important to step back and reexamine how the concept is defined and studied within the acculturation model. Acculturation model research focuses on the three elements of psychological adaptation: *attitudes* toward acculturation (e.g. desire to

maintain heritage identity and relate to the host society); *behavioural changes* implemented to function in the new society; and *acculturative stress* (e.g. levels of difficulty experienced in new environment) (Navas et al., 2007). Berry (2003) frequently placed his focus on acculturation attitudes. As integration hypothesis gained wider popularity, the attitudes element (or motivation) has been overly emphasized as a key factor in developing bicultural identity and became more frequently researched (Padilla & Perez, 2003). Consequently, by relying on the skewed research for integration attitudes, counsellors may overlook other vital behavioral and acculturative stress elements and unjustly place the burden of adaptation challenges on the newcomer's perceived lack of desire or motivation to acculturate. Further critical analysis of the model helps illuminate how bicultural strategy can be supplemented with additional perspectives to better serve counsellors in helping clients with cultural adaptation.

Criticisms of the Acculturation Model

Over the years Berry's model has faced conceptual and methodological criticisms (Rudmin, 2003) for not adequately considering the impact of individual and contextual factors in acculturation (Padilla & Perez, 2003). Conceptually, in order to modernize the model Berry (1997) has acknowledged the impact of many other moderating variables which affect cultural adjustment and therefore acculturating strategies. They include individual demographics (age, gender, education, employment), migration experience (motivation, expectations, granted status, length of stay), cultural distance (language, religion, etc.), personality (attitudes and coping strategies), resources and social support, and host culture reception (prejudice and discrimination). These factors do indeed moderate how acculturation will progress, but do not adequately explain how individuals manage to blend and maintain dual cultural identities. They also do not sufficiently explain why there are between-country variations in subjects adopting

biculturalism differently (Abu-Rayya & Sam, 2017). These factors need to be more prominently accounted for and incorporated into the theoretical framework. The most insightful challenges to the theoretical framework are discussed below.

Lack of Choice

Rudmin (2009) questioned how much individual control, if any, does a newcomer really have over the acculturation attitude they choose. Can separation or marginalization really be a deliberate decision? This is exemplified in the Van De Vijver (2015) study, demonstrating that modern involuntary instances of separation are generally forced by external circumstances. Researcher observed that amongst the resettled in Western Europe Muslim stay-at-home mothers many were unable to be involved in public life and culturally integrate possibly due to ethnic, practical or financial reasons; while other settlers never managed to learn the host language after decades of living exclusively within their own ethnic communities. Marginalization could result from reluctance to associate with the ethnic culture and inability to identify with the mainstream society, observed when Moroccan young adults rejected their ancestral rural culture due to perceived backwardness within the Dutch society, yet unable to integrate to the Dutch culture due to discrimination (Van De Vijver, 2015).

Discrimination

Secondly, it is essential to recognize how reception from the host society impacts the adaptation process. Schwartz et al., (2010) utilized Rumbaut's (2008) concept of *reactive ethnicity* to explain that when newcomers experience discrimination, they resist from further adopting to the new culture and clutch stronger towards their own heritage leaning into separation. Experiencing discrimination also can cause a reverse reaction of migrants distancing themselves from their heritage culture as a form of self-protection in effort to better assimilate

into new society (Choy et al., 2021). Migrants with illegitimate entry to the new country may actually experience discrimination and rejection from both their own and host cultures, leading to marginalization. It is evident that the role of discrimination should be viewed as a central determinant in how individuals will relate to either culture from onset of migration, determining cultural integration. A newcomer will be forced to adjust their strategy depending on how culturally diverse or receptive host environment is.

Situational and Temporal Plasticity of Acculturation

Thirdly, a two-dimensional model postulates the idea that newcomer's preferred acculturation strategy is a generally consistent, all-encompassing attitude that will apply across all areas of one's life (Berry et al., 1989). Yet, such consistency across situations and time has not been observed scientifically (Van de Vijver, 2015). Depending on the situational context, newcomers may choose to embrace different cultural positions or strategies (Bierwiazzonek & Waldzus, 2016; Kim, 2015; van der Zee & van Oudenhoven, 2022). For example, when trying to secure valued resources like employment or education, assimilation strategy may serve a newcomer better as opposed to situations when they are dealing with more personal issues that hold more ethnic importance (van der Zee & van Oudenhoven, 2022; Rudmin, 2003b). Therefore, it is likely that there are multiple subtypes of acculturative attitudes and successful integration is a malleable, less rigid adaptation strategy.

General Lack of Validity

Because the cut-off points between Berry's four categories are arbitrary and not well differentiated a four-quad categorization has proven challenging to replicate statistically (Schwartz et al., 2010). This causes results across different studies to be inconsistent and not comparable (Ward & Geeraert, 2016) putting into question the rationale for classification and

definition of four strategies. These ideas were further corroborated by correlational and longitudinal meta-analyses conducted by Bierwiazzonek and Kunst (2021). Their results failed to support Berry's (1980, 1997) assertion that a particular acculturation style predicts a positive or negative adaptation, constricting the usefulness of strategy categorization in cross-cultural adaptation. Thus, Berry's model requires further refinement to better account for other confounding factors and conclusions made on causality. Berry's (1997) concept of integration lacks precision regarding the personal and sociocultural factors that might cause individuals to experience biculturalism either as a dichotomy of dissimilar cultures or as a source of confusion, feeling both as insider and outsider (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). The lacking correlation might suggest that other confounding variables, like social context (receptivity and social support), personality traits (extraversion, neuroticism), cognitive strategies (motivation, stress management), language barriers and cultural distance might be stronger predictors of how migrants acculturate. In advocating for a multidimensional approach, Hylland Eriksen (2007) argued that it is the only way to incorporate the differences of majority and minority perspectives, enforced and chosen means in each of the four acculturation strategies, along with social and cultural dimensions.

Multidimensional Perspective on Cultural Integration

Theoretical progression towards multi-dimensional frameworks is guided by the merging of identity, personality, behavior, social and acculturation fields. Researchers are now focusing on how acculturation occurs across different life domains and how individual differences, like cognitive and personality traits, correlate with acculturation strategies (Van De Vijver, 2015).

However, amidst the sea of new ideas and frameworks, it is beneficial to anchor one's understanding of new research by continuing to orient towards biculturalism or integration,

based on their essential meaning of being able to successfully navigate both cultures (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). Integration requires theoretical supplementation with other dimensions, but it remains the only acculturation strategy that indicates overall most favorable adjustment for newcomers (Abu-Rayya & Sam, 2017; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013; Yoon et al., 2020).

Context of reception

Receiving society attitudes and acculturation expectations form a general context of reception for newcomers. These attitudes are influenced by such factors as newcomer's ethnic origin, religion, migration reasons and socioeconomic status, openness of metropolitan areas to other cultures, and geopolitical and economic events (Schwartz et al., 2010). For instance, a white European professional will likely be received differently than a Hispanic farm worker. Social attitudes in rural areas often impose more pressure to adopt practices of the new society, while the diversity of larger metropolitan cities allows for integration with ethnic community and may be less insistent on assimilation. Finally, global events and economic situations can significantly alter attitudes toward specific groups of settlers; for example, September 11 events led to increased discrimination against Middle Eastern migrant in the United States. How immigrants are perceived by the society determines their acceptance and treatment by the majority (Steiner, 2009), the community and tangible support available to them (Esses, 2021), their ability to integrate and contribute to the large society, and social harmony between groups (Christ et al., 2013).

An unwelcoming social climate is generally expressed through discrimination, including perceived discrimination and microaggression towards newcomers. Discrimination occurs when immigrants face unequal treatment compared to natives (Acolin et al., 2016). Perceived discrimination and microaggressions are subtler and harder to detect. Perceived discrimination

refers to individuals feeling unfairly treated due to belonging to a particular social group (Schmitt et al., 2014), while microaggressions are brief, often unintentional slights that make ethnic minority feel inferior (Sue et al., 2007). Microaggressions are manifested by pathologizing cultural practices or values, patronizing communication, teasing, minimizing minority experiences, or not acknowledging them, and reinforcing feelings of not belonging (Sue et al., 2007). In Canada, newcomers often face discriminatory attitudes based on their race, cultural ethnicity, language ability, as well as legal status and perceived foreignness (Nangia, 2013).

In the context of acculturation, discrimination and prejudice attitudes may arise when immigrants orient towards host, ethnic or both cultures (Piontkowski et al., 2002). The receiving majority group may be displeased if settlers do not adopt to their culture strongly enough. However, assimilation can also threaten the majority's identity and dominance, leading to a defensive rise in discrimination to maintain power dynamics (Crisp, Stone & Hall, 2006), further reinforcing negative perceptions of newcomers. Dominant-group members may view dual identifiers - those who identify with both host and ethnic groups - as untrustworthy and disloyal (Kunst et al., 2019). Consequently, when newcomers perceive discrimination, they will revert to believing that their ethnic identity is incompatible with the new culture (Holtz et al., 2013), reorient loyalty to ethnic heritage, regress developing an integrated identity (Christ et al., 2013; Padilla, 1980), and lose sense of belonging to the new society (Berry & Hou, 2016; Rumbaut, 2008). Finally, if newcomers identify too strongly with the new culture, they may also face push-back from their ethnic group due to perceived abandonment (Schwartz et al., 2010).

Larger society's attitudes create a climate of either multiculturalism, segregation, exclusion, or a melting pot assimilation (Bhugra et al., 2021). Minority groups often face environments that limit their acculturation strategies, forcing them to decide whether to approach

or withdraw from mainstream society when coping with stigmatization. If the reception atmosphere is unfavorable and underlined with perceived or real discrimination, it will contribute to acculturative stress and undermine bicultural identity integration (Huynh et al., 2018). A Bicultural Identity Integration Scale (Huynh et al., 2019), included in Appendix A, can be used to help clinicians assess whether clients are experiencing cultural harmony versus conflict or whether they are able to blend versus compartmentalize the two cultures.

These findings illustrate the perpetual pushback immigrants may face while integrating both cultures and establishing a sense of belonging. It is crucial to emphasize the impact of environmental constraints, such as social atmosphere, on the integration processes of minorities.

Multicultural Personality Traits

Successful adjustment to the new environment significantly depends not only on sociodemographic factors but also on individual factors. Even when migrants face similar challenges and contexts, not all will be able to maximize opportunities and adjust effectively. These individual factors may better explain why some succeed while others struggle. Van der Zee and van Oudenhoven (2022) proposed a dynamic multicultural personality model that takes into account not only interactional or situational context, but most importantly personality differences (traits) that stimulate individualized ways of approaching other cultural groups. In the model, the big five personality factors (Goldberg, 1990) were taken as foundational traits and translated into multicultural traits; for example, extraversion is equated with *social initiative*, neuroticism inversely equated with *emotional stability*, openness to experiences with *open mindedness*, in addition to two more dimensions of *cultural empathy* and *flexibility*, which are specific to the acculturation perspective (van der Zee & van Oudenhoven,

2022). Researchers found a strong relationship between developing these five competencies and positive between-group interactions and acculturation.

Similar findings were noted in the studies of immigrants' personalities. Those who pursue voluntary resettlement tend share similar characteristics like being more extraverted, open to experience, emotionally stable, as well as having motivation and achievement-oriented traits (Boneva & Frieze, 2001, Crown et al., 2020). This consistently observed collection of traits has been referred to as "migrant personality." This distinction is crucial, as it provides an important insight into personality differentiation and adjustment difficulties faced by migrants who arrive under other involuntary or forced circumstances, such as refugees, sojourners, and temporary residents, who may not possess these voluntary migrants' qualities.

When individuals encounter different cultures, they may experience conflict and perceive diversity as a threat. However, dimensions of emotional stability and flexibility can help newcomers manage anxiety from loss of control and uncertainty and feel less threatened (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; van der Zee & van Oudenhoven, 2022). Settling anxious feelings will help migrants stay engaged and open, not feeling the need to conform strictly to their existing viewpoints and distance from the discomfort. Once the perceived threat level is reduced, cultural empathy and curiosity enables settlers to learn from the new experiences and find harmony with two cultures by continuing social initiatives (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005).

These findings illustrate the significant role personality traits and perceptions play in adaptation, particularly the importance of addressing neuroticism and emotional stability.

Goal Setting and Motivation in Acculturation

The contemporary theoretical frameworks must position individuals adopting into new cultural environments as actively shaping their own acculturation outcomes. Some research

indicates that personality aspects tend to be relatively stable throughout lifespan (Crown et al., 2020; McGrae et al., 2000), making personality-based approaches seem overly deterministic in acculturation outcomes. To emphasize often-overlooked aspects of self-determination and agency in the integration process, cognitive strategies should be included. While personality traits are perceived as fixed, cognitive-behavioral strategies offer clarity and promote active participation and intentionality in adaptation. Cognitive strategies can include harnessing motivation for conscious goal setting, social network expansion, host culture learning and engagement.

While the subject of goal pursuit and motivation is not commonly studied in terms of its effect on acculturation and adaptation, with only a few studies available (Chirkov et al., 2007; Toth-Bos et al., 2019), goals are highly associated with migratory and acculturation processes. Goals were defined by Austin and Vancouver (1996) as internal representations of desired outcomes, events or processes. They play motivational role in both the migration process (Toth-Bos et al., 2020) and in helping newcomers integrate their ethnic and new cultural identities (Berry, 1997). Motivation-directed integration can promote personal empowerment, agentic creation of bicultural identity, reclaiming the ethnic pride and affiliations. The diverse range of potential goals can include mastering the new language, learning and accepting new cultural values, building social networks, and preserving ethno-cultural traditions and religious practices (Vishkin et al., 2021). As newcomers progress in attaining their main goals, they will feel increasingly more rooted and embedded in the new society (Toth-Bos et al., 2020). Identifying integration goals can provide stability of having a clear direction and planned behavior amidst resettlement confusion.

Cultural Distance

A discussion on cultural variations cannot embark without a brief clarification on the meaning of culture. Culture is as code of meanings specific to a particular group or region for understanding life, communicate, and develop attitudes through established values, norms and behaviors (Geertz, 1973). Therefore, people raised in different cultures will have very distinct worldviews. Yet these views and cultural specificities are generally layered beneath their conscious awareness, leaving individuals unaware of the differences between their own and other ethnic cultures in early acculturation. Because people will use different principles to understand the behaviors of others during cross-cultural interactions, there is a much higher likelihood for misinterpretations of the occurring emotions, acts, and relational dynamics.

The greater the differences between migrant's country of origin and the host country are, the more difficult the adjustment will be (Gertsen, 1990). This disparity is known as cultural distance and often measured by Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory, which classifies socio-cultural values into six tiers that range between: individualism vs. collectivism, power distance, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long vs. short time orientation and indulgence vs. restraint. Some values between different cultures end up on the opposite spectrums of each of these dimensions, creating greater distance, or value disparity, for an individual. When culturally expected scenarios of social interactions begin to differ from reality, feelings of surprise, confusion and tension may arise causing shock. However, Hofstede's measure of cultural distance is not designed to consider settler's subjective perception of cultural distance they might feel towards the host culture (Gertsen, 1990).

The Role of Social Networks in Integration

One of the ways of functioning effectively in a new culture is based on one's ability to establish social connects with local communities. Social support serves as a protective barrier

for health and psychological well-being during the adaptation process (LeMaster et al., 2018), particularly through emotional, cognitive and informational guidance (Wills, 1985). Studies have confirmed that social integration with the host and the ethnic community help decrease symptoms of depression, anxiety and PTSD (Lamkaddem et al., 2015; LeMaster et al., 2018). With increased perceived social support, positive feelings, hopeful expectations about the future, and motivation levels rose, while hopelessness diminished (Yildirim et al., 2020). Increasing social connections in a new country reduces cultural distance and directly enhances integration, as these connections facilitate cultural understanding, language acquisition, and a sense of belonging within the community. Benefits of social initiatives can be categorized into two groups: those gained from engaging with local nationals and those from connecting with one's ethnic diaspora.

The very first benefit that regular interaction with the native speakers can provide is enhancing one's language proficiency (LeMaster et al., 2018), which will lead to other forms of integration. For example, engaging with the dominant culture will accelerate adjustment through increased exposure to new customs and norms as well as grow the social capital (Bhugra et al., 2021). Locals can clarify and help migrants to navigate host services, legal residential obligations, identify opportunities to access resources and valuable information. As one's social capital expands, personal and professional growth will foster feelings of inclusion and acceptance in the new community. The extent of social contact with members of the host culture was found to predict a greater emotional adoption of that culture, particularly improve one's well-being and decrease feelings of isolation (De Leersnyder et al., 2011).

Ethnic connections with the local diaspora provide newcomers unique assistance with their cultural identity preservation, practical resources and emotional support. Noh and Kaspar

(2011) even noted that ethnic community provided more salient mental health support than non-ethnic in helping combat the effects of discrimination. Increased utilization of ethnic community support correlated with improved resettlement, acculturation, reduced preexisting mental health symptoms (LeMaster et al., 2018), and better acculturation outcomes (Barry et al., 2005).

Maintaining one's language, cultural practices, and traditions reinforces bicultural identity and pride in cultural origin. Expatriates can provide valuable information about ethnic community, cultural centers, celebration, and places to buy domestic goods. They also offer precise advice on local adaptation challenges, especially legal aspects of settlement. Friends from the same cultural background serve as a solid safety, minimizing homesickness, personal crises. These findings highlight the importance of social connections in facilitating positive adaptation outcomes and indicate that social integration is a key measure of successful navigation in a new culture.

Domain-Specific Integration (split integrative strategies)

Historically, theoretical models of acculturation have been classified dimensionally without considering the social context in which cultural adjustment occurs, but more recent research has been pointing to the differences in acculturation strategies used in various sociocultural domains (Birman et al., 2014; Ferrari et al., 2019; Schwartz et al., 2017), leading to the emergence of a new classification along a domain specificity (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2004). Arends-Tóth and van de Vijver emphasized how significant it is to examine immigrant functioning in different social spheres and established two general life domains of: *public* (functional) and *private* (socio-emotional, value-based). Their study further confirmed that although Turkish-Dutch immigrants used the integration strategy, by functioning between two cultures, they acculturated in very segregated ways - by aligning with the Dutch culture in the

public domain and maintaining Turkish culture in private atmospheres of home, family and religious community. Similar results were found by Snauwaert et al., (2003) in working with immigrants in Belgium.

Building on existing research, Navas et al., (2005) formulated a Relative Acculturation Extended Model (RAEM) to further itemize life domains into seven different spheres, because immigrants use not one but various adaptation strategies according to the social context, situations, and time spent in the new country. Arends-Tóth and van de Vijver (2004) illustrated how “one may seek economic or work assimilation and linguistic integration, while maintaining separation in family and marriage,” navigating not two specific cultures, but the complexity of circumstances and better fitting norms for it. According to RAEM acculturation attitudes are examined in three clusters. In the *peripheral spheres* of work (school), political and economic domains, which are predominantly of non-heritage culture, assimilation attitude might be better suited or expected. In the *intermediate* social domain sphere, there is more freedom for integration of both cultures. While the *central spheres* of family, religion and ways of thinking much stronger reflect immigrant’s ethnic traditions, cultural behaviors, core values and customs where separation attitudes are preferred by immigrants (Navas et al., 2007).

By comparing acculturation attitudes of both newcomers and locals, Navas et al., (2007) have identified that immigrants and natives align in their choice to assimilate in the work and economic spheres; they also overlap on the integration attitude in social domains; but they drastically contrast on the central spheres of family, religion and ways of thinking, where natives will likely choose assimilation and immigrants – separation. Significant differences in the private domain functioning may lead to societal pressure on newcomers to integrate more fully.

The complex structure of RAEM allows to measure such variables as majority and minority group acculturation attitudes, to account for ethnicity and culture of origin, to evaluate how contextual domains affect acculturation (unlike measuring individual psychological acculturation done by other models), and to pave the way for understanding social intergroup relationships more accurately (Navas et al., 2007). Domain dependent integration approaches promote positive psychological well-being (Birman et al., 2014), provide newcomers with situational resources to navigate cultural values (Psychology of Immigrant 101, n.d.), and offer clarity for maintaining multicultural identity. In a counselling setting, this framework can help identify areas where newcomers struggle to adapt, highlight problematic contexts, compare integration experiences in personal and public spheres, identify value and culture-based conflicts, and determine where clients would benefit from more advocacy or enhanced coping strategies.

Literature Review Summary

The literature review reveals that migrants' psychological and sociocultural well-being is significantly influenced by their acculturation strategies. Traditional models, such as the unidimensional assimilation model, have long dominated the discourse but fall short in addressing the complexities of modern migration patterns. The model emphasizes complete assimilation as the key to successful cultural adaptation. In contrast, bidimensional models, like Berry's (1997) acculturation framework, recognize personal choice and identify four strategies for integrating into a new society. Berry's integration strategy, in particular, is linked to positive well-being outcomes.

However, Berry's model also has limitations, highlighting the need for a multidimensional perspective that acknowledges acculturation as a deeply individual process. Emerging research underscores the significance of the contexts, domains, and dimensions of the

acculturating environment. Modern multidimensional models must incorporate societal and cultural factors alongside individual personality traits. Additionally, domain-specific integration demonstrates that acculturation can be a flexible, situationally-guided process. Modern counselling approaches for working with newcomer clients must be guided by the multidimensional perspectives.

The final section of the paper will center on extended discussion on what counsellors need to know when working with newcomer clients, and what are the most important aspects of cultural integration that should be addressed in the counselling setting.

Chapter 3: Implications for Counselling and Recommendations

By proposing a comprehensive multidimensional perspective on acculturation, I advocate for a culturally sensitive counselling approach that combines well-grounded ethnic and cross-cultural competency when addressing the challenges immigrant face in integrating into a new society. Cultural work in therapy can involve many angles, particularly cultural expressions or practices unfamiliar to the therapist. This poses a significant challenge, as it is virtually impossible to remain well-versed in many cultural values and practices. Therefore, working with sensitivity and providing clients options on navigating situations in the new culture is a preferred method. This approach guides the client in incorporating local social norms and behaviors while respecting their cultural background.

Culturally Sensitive Therapy

Culturally sensitive is often understood as cautious, but it is precisely the opposite of that. It's being culturally interested and non-judgmental, culturally affirmative and explorative. Compiled below is a list of culturally sensitive interventions that aim to improve mental health by building trust, engaging as an active listener, exploring culturally relative themes (e. g., family hierarchy and closeness), identifying client's cultural strength and challenges. For a resettler intervention would also include mutually exploring opportunities for integration, educating clients about local cultural nuances, evaluating and provide opportunities for social support.

Communication

Communication that transcends cultural affiliations can pose many challenges. Laungani (2004) pointed to several issues pertaining to therapy with multi-cultural clients. They include navigating difference of the shared meaning of concepts, verbal and non-verbal

misunderstandings, potential for misuse and ambiguity of metaphors used, differences in expectations and conflicting values systems between therapists and clients. Cross cultural communication, as proposed by Weiss (2007), can fostered and improve these linguistic challenges. Among his recommendations are: (a) slowing down the speech, (b) using plain, non-therapeutic language, (c) using visuals (drawing), (d) not overwhelming the client with excessive information, (e) fostering shame-free environment by encouraging questions and client engagement, (f) gently asking clients to explain more of what they experienced. When necessary, it may require engaging well-trained language interpreters or consulting with cultural broker to ensure the cultural and linguistic understanding during assessment and intervention (Kuo et al., 2020).

Client Engagement

Engaging clients from other cultural background may be even more challenging due to the stigma around therapy process, feeling intimidation from the power dynamics, cultural shame and hesitation to share, and fears about being accepted or understood. Half of ethnically and racially diverse clients do not return to counselling after the first visit (Sue & Sue, 2022). This makes it vitally important to create a welcoming environment from the first contact with clients through verbal (greetings, small talks) and non-verbal signals (facial expressions, body gestures) (Treatment (US), 2014). This sensitivity must further extend into intake and assessment, a process that many clients are not familiar with and may view as intrusive. Working collaboratively can decrease client's fears and hesitation of engagement, where expectations can be discussed, treatment process is explained, but most importantly discussing means how client can seek clarification, provide their input and interpretation, and offer feedback on pertinent cultural issues to be addressed (Treatment (US), 2014).

Identifying Culturally Relevant Themes and Challenges.

Reviewing client's relocation process (including home background, connection to it, and settlement in the new country) can unveil much detail about the encountered challenges and the support system available. Understanding the purpose and journey of resettlement can shed light on clients experience and level of acculturation, what adjustments were made towards integration, how their social status has changed, and how psychological and personal ties to the home country are maintained (Treatment (US), 2014). Identifying cultural themes would also highlight whether the client does strongly identify with their ethnic, family or new culture, so the cultural interventions can be adjusted to be client-relevant. Finally, some subcultures have collectively and personally experienced trauma and loss (home and family separation, persecution and torture, genocide and war, residential boarding schools, etc) which would be part of their cultural theme and should be addressed in treatment (Treatment (US), 2014).

Locating Cultural Strength and Resilience

Kuo & Rappaport (2024) suggested that to enhance client agency, utilize existing resources, and encourage active engagement in treatment, psychosocial interventions should shift to strength-based perspective where emphasis is placed on resilience and recovery-focus and less on vulnerabilities. Such shift would limit how much client's presenting concerns and problems can overpower therapeutic focus, particularly in the initial assessment, and balance them with client's abilities and available resources. Strength-based approach should be structured to reinforce cultural heritage (strength) and identity along with resilience (Treatment (US), 2014). Hays (2022) compiled a list of sources where therapist can locate client strengths and support. Strengths can be located in the pride and involvement with the heritage culture and practices, traditional knowledge and practical skills, religious and spiritual practices, generational wisdom,

cultural coping. The support can be identified by discussing extended family and friendships, community involvement and local resources.

Cultural Factors, Microaggression, and Social Justice in Therapy

Cross-Cultural Competence

Culturally sensitivity therapy is underpinned by the cross-cultural competence of the therapist, which is structured on the three elements of the practitioner, the client, and the skillset (Sue & Sue, 2022). Firstly, competence is built through therapist's recognition and understanding of their own culture and how it may be influencing their relationship with a client, through biases assumptions, personal limitations and Western cultural values and norms that may appear universal. Secondly, it also includes the therapist being comfortable, honoring and respectful to cultural beliefs, interpersonal styles or behaviors that are different from their own, in order to respond with curiosity instead of assumptively. A key element of cultural competence is cultural humility which is described by Tervalon and Murray Garcia (1998) as open attitudinal stance (being rather than doing) to diverse clients. Thirdly, utilizing cultural competence in therapy includes actively developing and practicing sensitive, active, cultural interventions and skills that are relevant to the client's individua complexity (Pakes & Roy-Chowdhury, 2007). Yet, finding these interventions is somewhat problematic as they remain empirically unacknowledged and unidentified. Leong and Wong (2003) put it best by stating that modern psychology, which is mostly White-European American, is primarily based on the Eurocentric archetypes, functioning under assumptions that these culture specific theories, formulation and scientific data are universal, when they are not. But its main flaw is not that it is based on this limited Eurocentric paradigm, but that it remains unacknowledged on a grander scale and unrecognized in therapy when ethnically untested theories or models are applied. The

danger is practicing culturally incompetent therapy, when not practicing with sensitivity, not encouraging client feedback and ongoing re-assessment. It is evident that developing cultural competence is an ongoing long-term process that requires individual as well as institutional and organization commitment to not remain monocultural (Sue & Sue, 2022).

Leong and Wong (2003) Proposed A Contingency Model of Cultural Competence which is contingent upon not only cultural differences, but more importantly on client's cultural perspective of individual versus group, short- or long-term orientation, meaning making, self-indulgent or achievement orientations and contextual domain or circumstances. The authors' following examples further describe model application. When working with an American trauma-survivor it may be more effective to emphasize post-traumatic growth perspective to regain greater life appreciation, spiritual wisdom and optimism instead of helping them coming to terms with the adverse circumstances beyond client's control. Or when working with Hindu clients, for whom optimal functioning is centered less on material success or achievement and more on finding inner peace, community service and unity with God. While for Chinese clients prioritizing family, parental cohesion, and obedience is likely to be of utmost importance. However, cultural values are highly susceptible to the risk of stereotypes, and naturally do not apply to every individual from the same background. So personal values, individual definitions of success and optimal functioning, personal perspective and situational domains must be considered with each client (Leong & Wong, 2003).

Bias and Microaggression in Therapy

According to the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association (CCPA, 2020)'s code of ethics, counsellors are expected to actively work to understand the cultural factors by recognizing and respecting diversity, and continually grow cultural awareness, including

examining personal biases. Counselors often struggle to address prejudice and racial discrimination due to unexplored personal bias, cultural countertransference that can arise from it, and insufficient cultural or intervention knowledge, leading them to therapeutical evasion of these subjects with clients (France et al., 2021). About 53% of clients experienced avoidance or minimization of cultural issues (forms of racial-ethnic microaggression) in therapy, two thirds of which were never addressed due to therapist's bias unawareness (Owen et al., 2015). The extent of the lack of awareness was illustrated by another study asking therapists to identify counsellor's microaggression from the video vignettes. Only 22% of therapists were able to recognize all 3 instances of microaggression (Owen et al., 2018). These results indicate an alarming number of therapists holding a level of biases and lack of ability to identify them, which is vital in addressing their occurrence and the injury they cause. Such instances will undermine both emotional safety and trust in therapy and directly rupture therapeutic alliance (Sue et al., 2007). Indicating that more emphasis should be placed on focusing to increasing one's ability to both notice and acknowledge them with clients. In doing so, it may be helpful to understand that microaggression or biases are not random and generally follow a social or psychological themes attached to a particular group of people. For example, in the United States individuals with Asian, Latinx or Pacific Islander backgrounds generally experience a theme of being a continual alien or invisible; African Americans are associated with danger and criminality; Indigenous people – with cultural inferiority and criminality; and LGBT community with disgust and sinfulness (Sue & Sue, 2022).

It is also important to note that counsellors are most likely to engage with only one form of microaggressions. Sue et al., (2007) identified three types: *microassault* (intentional attacking meant to hurt and insult), *microinsult* (rude and insensitive attitudes or gestures towards one's

heritage) and *microinvalidation* mostly unintentional “communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person.”

Microinvalidation is the most subtle expression of the three and poses the biggest threat to therapeutic alliance especially since majority of interracial therapeutic encounters, as mentioned above, are still prone to microaggressions. In checking their biases and understanding the impact of them to clients, therapists should be able check their intercultural and racial attitudes based on the nine categories of microaggression further distilled by Sue et al., (2007). They include such distinct re-settler themes as “alien in one’s own land, ascription of intelligence, color blindness, criminality/assumption of criminal status, denial of individual racism, myth of meritocracy, pathologizing cultural values/communication styles, second-class status, and environmental invalidation.” They may include generalized statements about one’s experience, pointing to client’s oversensitivity or diminishing their experience. Microinvalidations can strongly hinder therapy effectiveness or continuity and create unsympathetic environment by damaging the trust rapport, invalidating of client feelings, discourage openness and honesty, reinforcing negative feelings of inadequacy and unworthiness. It is essential that therapists take responsibility and take corrective steps to repair the negative impact of their biases with clients.

Advocacy for Justice, Social and Immediate Needs

The professional counselling ethics mandate requires to confront systemic factors and advocate for social justice that affect their clients' lives, through inclusivity, equality, and active support of rights (CCPA, 2020).

Social advocacy by therapists involves actively working to address and challenge social injustices and inequalities that affect their clients’ well-being. This can include several actions. One is raising awareness in local community about the challenges of resettlement, the

detrimental effects of discrimination and microaggression that deterioration both well-being and acculturation process. Secondly, advocating for policy and procedural change can involve taking steps to improve language barriers and newcomers' access to interpretation and educational services, healthcare, legal and welfare assistance. Thirdly, by engaging with local community and cultural organizations therapists can identify resources and support networks. When possible, it will also include cultivating support for creation of cultural counseling services and events that promote strengthening the ethnic identities.

Individual advocacy includes empowering clients and helping them develop confidence and skill to navigate their community better and advocate for their own needs and rights if necessary. Advocacy for refugees and asylum-seeking clients in Canada may require a more inclusive approach that includes not only mental health and community support, but also social and physical assistance. Because these resettled populations are more vulnerable and have distinct set of needs, advocacy work should include addressing more immediate necessities like employment and education, housing and transportation, language training and interpreting services (Kuo et al., 2020). Especially that these conditions are social determinants of health and well-being for these populations. Because so many of the barriers to successful resettlement are institutional, there is a need for a group focus from policymakers, program directors, scholars and various practitioners working with migrants, to address more of the contextual factors like discrimination, therapy and language barriers, social support for minority-group adaptation (Bierwiazzonek & Kunst, 2021). Otherwise continuing to see adaptation as solely individual acculturation strategy, displaces adaptation responsibility from receiving communities to newcomers themselves, when the burden should be shared.

Local Resources

Greater Victoria offers a variety of local organizations and centers that are beneficial to newcomers. The Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS, n.d.) and the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA, n.d.) assist newcomers with arrival advisory, language, employment and training, cultural information, resource referrals, women's physical and mental health resources, life planning, and children and youth programs. The Vancouver Island Counselling Centre for Immigrants and Refugees (VICCIR, n.d.) supports newcomers facing mental health needs, especially those dealing with trauma. VICCIR provides accessible counseling services and uses interpreters to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps. Additionally, VICCIR's ambassador program connects clients with volunteers who offer social, local, and interpersonal support through needs assessment and personalized connection. Lastly, the Greater Victoria Volunteer Society compiles local volunteer services, events, and training sessions suitable for various ages, genders, and interests. By leveraging counselor support and these resources, newcomers can experience a supportive and inclusive environment, facilitating their successful integration into the Greater Victoria community.

Strengthening Ethnic Identity and Cherishing Cultural Wealth

Maintaining cultural continuity through traditions and ethnic practices helps preserve a sense of identity, acting as a protective factor against the identity disorientation that can accompany acculturation. Ethnic identity involves feeling connected to a culture and developing a sense of self within that particular ethnic group through language, religion, dietary and leisure practices (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2004). Smith and Silva (2011) reported in their meta-analysis that a strong orientation towards heritage culture is consistently tied to increased self-esteem, subjective well-being and mental health for minority individuals in various societies. Strong ethnic identity also serves as coping mechanism and buffer against discrimination by

fostering a sense of solidarity within the diaspora (Choy et al., 2021; Lee, 2005; Mossakowski, 2003).

Using Phinney's (1992) conception, ethnic identity encompasses two dimensions: ethnic exploration (actively delving into one's ethnicity, traditions, and cultural history) and ethnic belonging (one's emotional attachment and pride in their ethnicity). By engaging in cultural exploration, clients can re-discover their ethnic cultural wealth and build their ethnic pride.

Counselors should prioritize these cultural resources in their therapeutic approach by starting to inquire how well and how often clients utilize their traditional activities and contacts.

Therapeutic exploration of a client's cultural heritage, values, and traditions, including family history, customs, and cultural symbols, can lead to the discovery and growth of ethnic pride. This journey may involve delving into stories, folklore, and identifying positive role models or local heroes. Therapists play a crucial role in validating and affirming the positive contributions of culture to a client's identity, while also challenging negative stereotypes about it and assisting clients in reframing them. Additionally, practical recommendations may include encouraging clients to express their cultural identity creatively through activities such as writing, art, music, or dance.

The knowledge, skills, values, and experiences rooted in one's culture has been identified as cultural capital, which plays a crucial role in enhancing resilience, coping and functioning at both individual and group levels, as well as promoting migrants' achievement and social mobility (Bhugra et al., 2021). Religious rituals and beliefs, even not practiced, constitute a fundamental aspect of an individual's cultural identity, serving to uphold community values and cultivate a sense of belonging (Bhugra & Becker, 2005). Without relying on these resources, it can be particularly problematic for newcomers to build their bicultural identity, as they may experience

an erosion of cultural congruity. Especially as globalization is both promoting and beginning to undermine the values of multiculturalism by posing the danger of homogenization with potential amalgamation into a new version of monoculture for all (Laungani, 2004). Such trends can negatively impact mental well-being caused by cultural bereavement, conceptualized as a loss of cultural norms, religious customs, and social support systems (Bhugra & Becker, 2005). This makes it vitally important for mental health professional to address the cultural aspects, value and strength of ethnic identification in acculturation (especially with refugee clients) in order to preserve and utilize best aspects of one's cultural identity.

Addressing Context of Reception and Discrimination

Focusing therapeutic attention on the social and environmental constraints produced by the majority group stigmatization of minorities (Padilla and Perez, 2003) is equally important as addressing individual variants in acculturation. Especially when implications of discrimination and microaggression on newcomers are substantial; with risk factors for psychological maladjustment (Benner et al., 2018; Sue et al., 2007), including symptoms of depression, anxiety, sadness, (Ferrari et al., 2019;-Suh et al., 2019). Experiences of perceived discrimination and microaggressions negatively predict sociocultural (Buchanan et al., 2018) and psychological adaptation, haltering integration (Sue et al., 2007; Suh et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2023). In their studies of perceived discrimination, Duru and Poyrazli (2011) found that it contributed to international students developing negative attitudes towards host culture, causing friction in social interactions. Unwelcoming social settings and atmosphere of hostility in public reception of newcomers diminished life satisfaction in immigrants in Europe (Kogan et al., 2018), US (Hendriks & Bartram, 2016) and Canada (Houle & Schellenberg, 2010).

Sue et al., (2019) created a conceptual microintervention framework for combatting microaggression and other types of discrimination with clients through validation of their experiences and personhood, providing support and encouragement, affirmations of their group or racial identity, and reassuring that they are not alone. In addition, the authors also outlined four steps of engaging with perpetrators in order to help clients build a repertoire of responses to disarm these often-elusive affronts quickly and regain a sense of control. The first intervention is to make the invisible visible, and is based on improving one's ability to detect the hidden or double meaning of the message and verbally acknowledge it. Disarming microaggression includes interrupting the exchange to show disagreement aiming to stop, deflect or challenge the harmful comment through verbal, non-verbal ways and by leaving. Third is to educate the offender by differentiating between their good intent and harmful impact, which will also reduce their defensiveness. The final recommendation is for victims to seek support, allies, or a buddy system to express their concerns safely and get advice. Studies have indicated that active, problem-focused coping styles and social support are more successful in decreasing the negative mental health effects of perceived discrimination, while passive, emotion-focused coping had the opposite impact (Noh & Kaspar, 2011).

Therapist's intervention could include cognitive restructuring of negative thoughts arising from discrimination, behavioral activation to reduce feeling helplessness, empowering by identifying personal strengths and setting goals, and using narrative therapy techniques to re-author agency and resiliency narratives as well as positioning discrimination as external problem and not a personal failure. However, interventions must be consistent with client's situational context, power dynamics, and cultural orientation. They may include: (a) encouraging safe engagement by considering time and public or private ways to engage; (b) preserving their

emotional depletion by confronting only when it is most productive; (c) shifting to educational instead of confrontational approach with closer relationships and shorter assertive responses with strangers (Sue et al., 2019). The degree of how direct or subtle these responses will be can be tailored with the client, particularly as research indicates that Asian Americans prefer indirect and subtle approach to preserve harmony while African Americans need to confront prejudice directly (Lee et al., 2012).

Addressing Personality Traits in Therapy

Apart from cultural, domain, institutional or social adjustment, personality trait modification is equally important. Although some research indicates that personality traits remain relatively stable across lifetime (Eysenck, 1967; McGrae et al., 2000) and are not changed by the migration process (Crown et al., 2020), van der Zee and van Oudenhoven (2022) affirmed that these traits can be intentionally developed to grow multicultural personality. Multicultural Personality Questionnaire developed by van der Zee et al. (2013), found in Appendix B, can be used to help clients explore their personality traits deeper and identify areas for improvement. Building cultural empathy can be done by encouraging clients to actively regard and respect the feelings and behaviors of others. Role-playing exercising where clients put themselves into the others' shoes can foster different perspectives and appreciation for them. Open-mindedness can be explored by addressing prejudices clients may have to new cultural norms by encouraging safe non-judgemental exploration of new practices or values that are uncomfortable. Building flexibility increases one's ability to regard novelty as a positive challenge and can be explored by assessing client's stress management techniques and problem-solving strategies. Finally, addressing client's ability to initiate social connections can be approached by understanding how active and skilled they are at actively engaging with social

situations and others. This may require social skill development and cultural education on social rules. Studies confirm that all of these traits are positively correlated with integration (Schmitz & Schmitz, 2022).

Building emotional stability helps individuals control their reactions and remain calm in situations where there is a loss of predictability and control, resulting in tension and anxiety.

Neuroticism, which is inversely related to integration, predicts higher marginalization and poor overall adaptation (Ryder et al., 2000). Characterized by volatility and subsequent withdrawal to manage dysregulation, neuroticism can hinder successful acculturation. Therapeutic approaches should focus on reducing neurotic traits through interventions like cognitive restructuring to address negative thought patterns, emotion regulation techniques, and activities that build resilience and coping skills.

Neuroticism, extraversion, and openness are highly relevant in the acculturation context and deserve particular attention in understanding bicultural adjustment (Schmitz & Schmitz, 2022). Roberts et al. (2017) conducted a meta-analysis revealing that emotional stability (inverse neuroticism) showed the most change with therapy after only four weeks of treatment, followed by extraversion. Although the type of therapy was not significantly related to the amount of change, anxiety and depression disorders were treated most successfully, showing the greatest improvement. This research challenges the notion of personality constancy and suggests that therapeutic interventions can significantly impact personality traits and aid in the acculturation process. Finally, therapeutic work on cultural underpinnings of personality traits might also explore how collectivist values, family and gender expectations, birth order, or cultural teachings have influenced the development of personal character traits.

Building Social Networks

The importance of networks with the host society and one's ethnic community in that they provide a robust support system that helps navigate the challenges of living in the new environment and enhance cultural adaptation. Only 36% of new Canadians report having someone they can rely on, compared to 52% of native-born Canadians, indicating how difficult it is for newcomers to establish vigorous support networks, affecting integration into Canada (Parajeles Reyes, 2023). These statistics underscore the importance for counselors to assess and assist clients in building social networks (Choy et al., 2021). A client-centered and culturally sensitive approach must recognize that clients may feel resistance integrating with their ethnic or new community due to feelings of shame from either adopting new values or not achieving certain personal or economic standards. In such cases it is crucial to address these barriers in therapy.

In a therapeutic setting, counselors should evaluate the structure and quality of clients' social networks by discussing the frequency and nature of their social interactions, as well as the local presence of family and friends. Helping clients build these networks involves providing social support through counseling and connecting them to support and shared-interest groups. Social networks would be of particular importance for migrants from collectivist cultures, as they may be more oriented to solving difficulties with the help of the community. A General Belongingness Scale (GBS), which was developed to briefly measure general belongingness through 12-item questionnaire (Malone et al., 2012), can be adapted (Appendix C) to help clients assess their sense of belonging to their heritage and Canadian communities.

Counselors should stay informed about community-based integrated support services and local opportunities for social engagement, such as language classes, religious and spiritual centers, volunteer organizations, shared interest groups (like meetups), fitness and community

centers, library events, immigrant agencies, ethnic associations, and self-help and support groups.

Meaning Making and Goal Setting

Finding meaning is a fundamental factor of human experience and well-being and underpins many concepts of positive psychology along with hope, creativity, happiness and character strength (Rich, 2001). Because construction of meaning is influenced by social forces, cultural context shapes individual's meaning and values, making it particularly relevant in acculturation (Rich). Yet positive intervention can go beyond meaning and resilience building and towards motivation and goal-pursuit to help clients improve their circumstances.

Incorporating goals orientation in treatment also includes determining client's motivation and readiness to change or pursue treatment. Prochaska and DiClemente's (1984) transtheoretical model of change can be easily applied to culturally diverse populations to assess the stage of readiness to pursue goals. Similarly motivational interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 2002) has strong evidence of being useful with diverse cultural and ethnic groups (Treatment (US), 2014). Particularly as it emphasizes working emphatically, rolling with resistance, avoiding confrontation and supporting self-efficacy.

In the context of acculturation, two factors are essential to the attainment of goals: their intrinsic/extrinsic value (Kasser & Ryan, 1996) and the means of achieving them (Vishkin et al., 2021). Intrinsic goals stem from the basic human nature and needs for personal growth, connection with others and community, and are regarded as more vital and value-based. Extrinsic goals, which are formed by cultural norms, are centered around attractiveness, status, fame and financial success. Because the benefits of extrinsic goals tend to be short lived and not associated with well-being (Kasser & Ryan, 1996), Toth-Bos et al. (2020) argued that intrinsic

goal importance and attainment are substantially more beneficial in acculturation. Although extrinsic goals like better paying jobs, attainment of status or goods not accessible before may seem appealing as markers of success or happiness for migrants, they have not been found as predictors of successful adaptation in the foreign culture in the long run (Hendriks et al., 2018). Since these goals tend to be more materialistic and individualistic, they contribute little to enhancing newcomer's sense of belonging, increasing social connections, becoming a valued member of community or fostering personal growth. These factors are crucial for grounding individuals in their new environment and reducing longing for old friendships and ways of life.

Acculturation outcomes are also determined and can be predicted by how well immigrants' motivation to acculturate aligns with the means (financial, psychological, contextual and emotional resources) available to achieve them. Meaning that “motivation to adopt the host culture is likely to contribute to adaptive outcomes only to the extent that the means for doing so are available” (Vishkin et al., 2021). If the resources are available to learn new language and culture, build new social networks, expand personal values, maintain a meaningful connection with the heritage traditions, religion and community – then integration can occur. Failing to adequately account for the means, counsellors may inadvertently pathologize client's approach, impose client-insensitive strategies.

Keeping a close track of one's ambition and sustaining motivation are best captured by the goal-setting framework by Austin and Vancouver (1996) which emphasizes the importance of setting specific and achievable goals to make them effective and motivational. The model outlines that the goals should be well-defined, attainable, measurable relevant and time-bound. Assessing congruency between motivation and means as well as intrinsic significance is useful in

understanding stagnation in goal attainment, diminished motivation by offering a new dimension to how integration process might be explored in the therapeutic setting.

Summary of Recommendations

A multidimensional perspective on acculturation and culturally sensitive counseling is essential for helping immigrants integrate into new societies. Cultural work in therapy involves exploring diverse practices, ensuring sensitivity, and helping clients adapt to local norms while respecting their backgrounds. Therapists should be non-judgmental, build trust, educate clients about local culture, and address biases to support integration. Maintaining cultural continuity and strong ethnic identity enhances self-esteem and mental health, while addressing discrimination and building social networks is crucial for psychological well-being. Personality traits like empathy and stability aid acculturation, and goal-setting with a focus on intrinsic goals supports adaptation. Future research should explore diverse cultural contexts and the interactions between majority and minority groups.

Future Directions in Acculturation Research

Acculturation research has predominantly focused on Western societies and a limited variety of ethnic settlers. There remains a significant gap in understanding how different cultural values influence acculturation strategies and outcomes. Most studies conducted in the United States have involved Asian or Latin American subjects (Schwartz et al., 2010). There is an acute necessity to study acculturation strategies within diverse societies, ethnic groups, and contexts outside Western-North American locales (Berry, 2003). Examining how different cultural norms and values affect acculturation can help develop more tailored and effective support interventions.

Bierwiazzonek and Kunst (2021) have been strong proponents of considering socio-contextual factors as predictors of acculturative outcomes. Future research could explore how such variables and individual factors, such as socio-economic status, type of migration (voluntary or forced, including refugee versus immigrant status), the ethnic structure of residential communities, and national immigration and monocultural policies, affect the biculturalism-adjustment interplay. Conducting more longitudinal studies could also be beneficial by tracking how cultural orientations between host and ethnic cultures change over time, providing insights into whether there is temporal constancy in acculturation strategies.

Given the projected increase of migration into Canada, driven by globalization, the topic of acculturation needs to be given greater emphasis in studies, research, as well as methods used by various professionals working with the new migrants. Although existing research has produced specific findings on the domain dimensions and contexts of acculturation, accurately reflecting the complexity and breadth of environments where acculturation strategies are used (Birman et al., 2014; Ferrari et al., 2019; Schwartz et al., 2017), a well-formulated theoretical framework that goes beyond Berry's (1997) model is still missing (Rudmin, 2009). Such a framework would unify integration with other multidimensional perspectives. Research within a multidimensional perspective could be directed to evaluating which acculturation dimensions contribute most to successful integration, examining any correlations or causations between them, and understanding how cultural origin may predispose a newcomer toward specific acculturation dimensions.

Further investigation is needed to determine whether individuals who consistently rely on the integration strategy have better psychological and adjustment outcomes than those who rotate cultural orientations and domain-dependent strategies. Additionally, successful acculturation

outcomes should be defined by the minority participants themselves rather than by majority researchers, as improvements in external indicators such as social or financial status, cultural knowledge, or personal achievements may not fully capture one's feeling of success (Rudmin, 2009).

Another cultural and social shift on the horizon is the dissolution of the dominant culture due to the increasing volume of migration into Western countries. As minority groups continue to grow, the native population may shift from majority status to becoming another minority group (Van De Vijver, 2015). This means that acculturation is increasingly affecting the dominant group as well. Further research could focus on how the acculturation process occurs when all groups are undergoing continuous adjustment and adaptation to one another and the effects of these dynamics.

While globalization has fostered the rise of multiculturalism and cultural integration, increasing rates of cultural amalgamation pose the risk of assimilation and loss of cultural diversity (Schwartz et al., 2010). Such changes could begin to erase cultural distinctions, traditions, and values, greatly affecting ethnic pride, cultural capital, and eventually ethnic identity—factors that provide a buffer during the migratory process. Future studies may need to prioritize understanding ethnic identity preservation and the risks of its disappearance to provide insights into how integration can be utilized to preserve cultural uniqueness.

Conclusion

Migration has always been inevitable, from ancient times to our modern globalized world. Plato (ca. 375 B.C.E./1961) might have warned about amalgamation of cultures being a challenge for the states, but also advised that prohibiting these cultural integrations risks nations appearing uncivilized and ruthless, exhibiting harsh and unfriendly attitudes. Just as societies

need to remain open to the continuous changes in their socio-ethnic fabric, so must research and theoretical models. Understanding the re-settlement process by magnifying the cultural lens offers new perspectives and frames of reference for therapists working with immigrant clients, because culture anchors one's views, behaviors, beliefs.

This comprehensive research emphasizes the necessity of evolving theoretical frameworks towards a new acculturation model, especially as “global, multiple, and inclusive identities are all examples of concepts that cannot be adequately captured in a two-dimensional acculturation framework” (Van De Vijver, 2015). Van De Vijver summarized it best by stating that the shelf life of current models appears to be inherently much shorter than expected.

Rather than focusing on individual acculturation styles, it may be more productive if policymakers, practitioners, and researchers to consider well-identified contextual, structural and institutional factors such as discrimination, barriers to language acquisition and social support (Bierwiazzonek and Kunst, 2021). In the counselling setting, the focus should also extend to personality factors, motivation, and cultural proximity. Choy and colleagues (2021) concluded in their research on acculturation strategies that external conditions and abilities, factors that are independent of which acculturation strategy is adopted, influence acculturation attitudes more.

Counselling recommendations focus on fostering culturally sensitive therapy and addressing culturally pertinent themes and dimensions with clients. Culturally sensitive therapy starts by ensuring client engagement, tailoring communication, and interpreting services, and attuning to culturally relevant themes while building resilience through ethnic resources. Being a culturally sensitive therapist requires an ethnically open-minded stance. Western therapists operate from an individualistic approach which values autonomy and independence, values that are culturally related to mental health as indicators of maturity and self-reliance (Sue & Sue,

2022). Cultural work in therapy involves exploring various cultural expressions and practices, often unfamiliar to the therapist; therefore, imposing Western values on culturally diverse or collectivist-oriented clients risks cultural oppression or victimization. Addressing therapists' own cultural biases and microaggressions is crucial for maintaining a safe and effective therapeutic alliance. Therapists must also advocate for social justice, addressing systemic factors affecting clients' lives and empowering them to navigate their communities and advocate for their needs and rights. Local organizations and centers in Greater Victoria offer valuable resources to support newcomers, facilitating their successful integration into the community.

Effective client interventions should include preserving ethnic identity and new culture learning to foster successful bicultural identity integration. This goal cannot be achieved if therapists do not adequately explore the social reception, discrimination and social support themes in client's life. Integration may be expedited by exploring and cultivating multicultural personality traits and setting adequate goals for healthy adjustment to the new society.

Future studies and acculturation research must extend beyond Western societies and limited variety of ethnic samples to provide better understand how cultural values influence integration outcomes. Studies should incorporate socio-contextual factors, such as socio-economic status, migration type, and national policies, multiple groups integrating amongst each other, focusing on how these factors affect acculturation. Most importantly, acculturation research must be aimed at developing a more nuanced theoretical model of integration that adequately reflects the complex social and individual realities of acculturation.

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Appendix A – Bicultural Identity Integration Scale – Version 2 (BIIS-2)

INSTRUCTIONS: Please use the following scale to rate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree

CH/C

- ___ 1. I find it easy to harmonize _____ and Canadian cultures.
- ___ 2. I rarely feel conflicted about being bicultural.
- ___ 3. I find it easy to balance both _____ and Canadian cultures.
- ___ 4. I do not feel trapped between _____ and Canadian cultures.
- ___ 5. I feel torn between _____ and Canadian cultures.
- ___ 6. Being bicultural means having two cultural forces pulling on me at the same time.
- ___ 7. I feel that _____ and Canadian cultural orientations are incompatible.
- ___ 8. I feel conflicted between _____ and Canadian ways of doing things.
- ___ 9. I feel like someone moving between two cultures.
- ___ 10. I feel caught between _____ and Canadian cultures.

CB/C

- ___ 11. I cannot ignore the _____ or Canadian side of me.
- ___ 12. I feel _____ and Canadian at the same time.
- ___ 13. I relate better to combined cultures than to _____ or Canadian culture alone.
- ___ 14. I feel _____-Canadian.
- ___ 15. I feel part of a combined culture.
- ___ 16. I do not blend _____ and Canadian cultures.
- ___ 17. I keep _____ and Canadian cultures separate (I do not mix them).

Measures: (CH/C) - Cultural Harmony vs. Conflict; (CB/C) – Cultural Blendedness vs. Compartmentalization.

- _____ 27. I am not easily hurt.
- _____ 28. I keep calm when things do not go well.
- _____ 29. I worry.
- _____ 30. I am under pressure.
- _____ 31. I am insecure.
- _____ 32. I get upset easily.

OP

- _____ 33. I like to imagine solutions to problems.
- _____ 34. I am a trendsetter in societal developments.
- _____ 35. I have feelings for what is appropriate in culture.
- _____ 36. I have broad range of interests.
- _____ 37. I seek people from different backgrounds.
- _____ 38. I try out various approaches.
- _____ 39. I start a new life easily.
- _____ 40. I am looking for new ways to attain my goals.

Measures: (CE) - Cultural Empathy; (FX) – Flexibility; (SI) - Social Initiative; (ES) - Emotional Stability; (OP) - Open-mindedness

Appendix C – Sense of Belongingness Scale

INSTRUCTIONS: Please use the following scale to rate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

Scale

- | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Strongly Disagree | 4. Neither agree nor disagree | 7. Strongly Agree |
| 2. Slightly disagree | 5. Slightly agree | |
| 3. Disagree | 6. Agree | |

Statements	My ethnic	Canadian
1. When I am with my ethnic or Canadian people, I feel included.	_____	_____
2. I have close bonds with my ethnic or Canadian friends.	_____	_____
3. I feel like an outsider from my ethnic or Canadian community.	_____	_____
4. I feel as if my ethnic or Canadian people do not care about me.	_____	_____
5. I feel accepted by my ethnic or Canadians people.	_____	_____
6. Because I do not belong to my ethnic or Canadian community, I feel distant during the holiday season.	_____	_____
7. I feel isolated from my ethnic or Canadian community.	_____	_____
8. I have a sense of belonging to my ethnic or Canadian community.	_____	_____
9. When I am with my ethnic community or Canadians, I feel like a stranger.	_____	_____
10. I feel connected with my ethnic or Canadian communities.	_____	_____
11. My ethnic or Canadian friends do not include me in their plans.	_____	_____

Statements 1, 2, 5, 8, 10, 11 measure feelings of acceptance and inclusion. Statements 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 12 measures feelings of rejection or exclusion. Higher scores represent a larger sense of belonging to the heritage, Canadian or both communities.