Intercultural Relations and Acculturation in the Pacific Region

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The Pacific region is one of the most culturally diverse areas of the world; societies within this region are also culturally diverse. For both these reasons, intercultural relations and acculturation phenomena are at the forefront of psychological interests there. This paper first situates these phenomena in their ecological and cultural contexts, in which human diversity and individual behaviour can be examined and understood as adaptations to these contexts. Then the notion of differentiation in psychological and sociocultural phenomena is discussed, linking them to the concept of social capital. The processes involved in acculturation and intercultural relations are then described, and linked to the concept of differentiation. The argument is presented (with an empirical example from research with immigrant youth) that the more differentiated are a person's psychological life, as well as their social and cultural engagements, then the better adapted they are to living interculturally. Suggestions for policy and programme development and implementation are made: these include advancing the multicultural way of living together, and of accepting the need for mutual accommodation.

Keywords: acculturation, assimilation, differentiation, integration, intercultural relations, marginalisation, multiculturalism, security, separation, social capital

The Pacific region encompasses perhaps the most diverse set of cultures in the world. From indigenous peoples in East Asia and the Pacific islands, through to those in the Western hemisphere, and from largely European-derived settler societies in Australia and New Zealand to those in North and South America, cultural variation represents virtually all forms of cultural adaptations and achievements. Hunting, gathering fishing, agricultural, industrial and post-industrial societies live and thrive in juxtaposition. This variation lays the foundation for historical and contemporary human development, intercultural contact, intercultural relations and mutual acculturation in complex ways.

Although I am writing from a Canadian perspective, my own involvement with this vast region has extended from the mid-1960s, while working on many diverse issues in Australia and New Guinea (on issues of cognitive differentiation and acculturation; Berry, 1976), to projects in Indonesia (on community-based rehabilitation; Dalal, Pande & Berry, 2000) and to South East Asia and China (on mutual intercultural relations; Leong & Berry, 2010). Much of this work has been concerned with basic psychological issues related to culture (e.g., cross-cultural psychology; Berry, Poortinga, Breugelmans, Chasiotis, & Sam, 2010; and indigenous psychology; Allwood & Berry, 2006; Kim & Berry, 1993), and to applications of psychology to societal development and wellbeing (e.g., Berry, Mishra, & Tripathi, 2002) and acculturation (e.g., Sam & Berry, 2006).

While working with indigenous peoples, I became concerned with the largely negative impact on them of intercultural contact and the resultant acculturation. The themes of psychological differentiation, intercultural relations and acculturation have since become entwined in my research work and in applications to policy and program development in many kinds of cultural communities.

In this article, the following core ideas are reviewed: features of culture are considered to be adaptive to the ecosystem in which they evolve; individuals develop and display behaviours that are adaptive to these eco-cultural contexts; and contact between groups and individuals that carry these cultures and behaviours into the intercultural settings result in the processes of change that can be understood in terms of intercultural and acculturation strategies and outcomes.

Ecocultural Approach

The ecocultural approach (Berry, 2003) seems to be ready made for understanding the cultural and behavioural phenomena to be found in this region. Over the years, an attempt has been made to incorporate many ideas and issues into a working framework for cross-cultural psychological research (Berry, 1966, 1976; Berry et al., 1986; Mishra, Sinha & Berry, 1996). The *ecocultural framework* is a kind of map that lays out the categories of variables that need to be examined in studies seeking to understand human behavioural diversity, both in their local contexts and comparatively. This ecocultural perspective has evolved through a series of research studies devoted to understanding similarities and differences in perception, cognition and social behaviour (Berry, 1976; Berry et al., 1986; Mishra, Sinha, & Berry, 1996) to a broad approach to understanding human diversity. The core ideas have a long history (Jahoda, 1995), and have become assembled into conceptual frameworks (Berry, 1975, 1995) used in empirical research, and in coordinating textbooks in cross-cultural psychology (Berry et al., 2010). Similar ideas and frameworks have been advanced both by anthropologists (e.g., Feldman, 1975; Whiting, 1974) and psychologists (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979), who share the view that human activity can only be understood within the context in which it develops and takes place.

The ecocultural perspective is rooted in two basic assumptions. The first (the 'universalist' assumption) is that all human societies exhibit commonalities, both cultural ('cultural universals') and psychological. This perspective holds that basic psychological *processes* are shared, species-common characteristics of all human beings on which culture plays variations during the course of development and daily activity. The second is the 'adaptation' assumption: *behaviour* is considered to be differentially developed and expressed in response to ecological, sociopolitical and cultural contexts. This view allows for comparisons across cultures (on the basis of the common underlying process), and makes comparison worthwhile (using the surface variation as basic evidence).

In the social sciences, such as cultural anthropology (e.g., Murdock, 1975) or sociology (e.g., Aberle, Cohen, Davis, & Sutton, 1950), there is substantial evidence that groups everywhere possess shared cultural and social attributes. For example, all peoples have language, tools, social structures (e.g., norms, roles) and social institutions (e.g., marriage, justice). It is also evident that such commonalities are expressed by groups in different ways from one time and place to another. Similarly, there is parallel evidence, at the psychological level, for both underlying similarity and surface variation (Berry et al., 1997). For example, all individuals have the competence to develop, learn and perform speech, technology, role-playing and norm observance. At the same time, there are obviously group and individual differences in the extent and style of expression of these shared underlying processes. As we have noted, this combination of underlying similarity with surface expressive variation has been given the name 'universal' by Berry et al. (2010) to distinguish it both from 'absolutism', which tends to ignore cultural influence on behavioural development and expression, and from 'relativism', which tends to ignore the existence of common underlying psychological processes. Of course, while variations in behavioural expression can be directly observed, underlying commonalities are a theoretical construction and cannot be observed directly. Paradoxically, this search for our common humanity can only be pursued by observing our diversity. And this dual task is the essence of cross-cultural psychology (Berry, 1969, 2000).

The current version of the ecocultural framework (Berry, 2011; Berry et al., 2010) proposes to account for human psychological diversity (both individual and group similarities and differences) by taking into account two fundamental sources of influence (ecological and sociopolitical), and two features of human populations that are adapted to them: cultural and biological characteristics. These population variables are transmitted to individuals by various 'transmission variables', such as cultural transmission (enculturation, socialisation), genetics, and acculturation. Our understanding of both cultural and genetic transmission have been greatly advanced by recent work on culture learning and on the human genome project. The essence of both these domains is the fundamental similarity of all human beings (at a deep level), combined with variation in the expression of these shared attributes (at the surface level).

Finally, the sociopolitical context brings about contact among cultures, so that individuals have to adapt to more than one context. When many cultural contexts are involved (as in situations of culture contact and acculturation), psychological phenomena can be viewed as attempts to deal simultaneously with two (sometimes inconsistent, sometimes conflicting) cultural contexts (Berry, 2005). These attempts at understanding people in their multiple contexts is an important alternative to the more usual pathologising of colonised or immigrant cultures and peoples. Of course, these intercultural settings need to be approached with the same non-ethnocentric perspective as cross-cultural ones (Berry, 1985). Work on the process and outcomes of acculturation has also been advancing (e.g., Sam & Berry, 2006), necessitated by the dramatic increase in intercultural contact and change.

To summarise, the ecocultural framework considers human diversity (both cultural and psychological) to be a set of collective and individual adaptations to context. Within this general perspective, it views cultures as evolving adaptations to ecological and sociopolitical influences, and views individual psychological character-

istics in a population as adaptive to their cultural context. It also views (group) culture and (individual) behaviour as distinct phenomena at their own levels that need to be studied independently in order to be able to examine their systematic relationships.

The ecocultural approach offers a 'value neutral' framework for describing and interpreting similarities and differences in human behaviour across cultures (Berry, 1994). As adaptive to context, psychological phenomena can be understood 'in their own terms' (as the anthropologist Malinowski insisted), and external evaluations can usually be avoided. This is a critical point, since it allows for the conceptualisation, assessment and interpretation of culture and behaviour in non-ethnocentric ways. It explicitly rejects the idea that some cultures or behaviours are more advanced or more developed than others. Any argument about cultural or behavioural differences being evaluated or ordered hierarchically requires the adoption of some absolute (usually external) standard. But who is so bold, or so wise, to assert and verify such a standard?

Psychological and Cultural Differentiation

A major reason for viewing individual human behaviour and its development within the ecocultural framework is that we can deal with human differentiation as a phenomenon without being afraid of the discussion being cast in an ethnocentric frame. The issue of differences need not be seen as one of deficiency or superiority. Psychological differences can be viewed as culturally adaptive expressions of underlying psychological universals that are guided by differential social and cultural contexts. These ideas have been captured in the 'law of cultural differentiation' (Irvine & Berry, 1988) based on the proposal of Ferguson (1956): individuals will develop patterns of behaviour that are adaptive to the differing cultural circumstances they engage.

Differentiation in a person's cognitive life has been earlier linked to their ecocultural and social circumstances and thence to their wellbeing (Berry, 1976; Berry & Annis, 1974a, 1974b; Witkin & Berry, 1975): the more differentiated a person, the less they exhibit stress reactions to social and cultural change. The role of psychological differentiation is now being considered alongside the role of social differentiation as a factor in the outcomes of intercultural relations and acculturation.

Another way to conceptualise these contexts is to employ two ideas that have been advanced as social science discourse to capture the degree of complexity and differentiation in a person's social life. The first is 'social capital' (Bordieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988), which is defined as the complexity of social networks that a person is involved in. The second is 'capabilities' (Sen, 2005), which is defined as a person's capacity and freedom to choose and to act within these social and economic networks.

The basic idea is that the more differentiated is a person's psychological and social life, the better able they are to engage in intercultural and acculturation processes, and the more likely they are to have more positive outcomes. Given the 'universalist' perspective outlined earlier, I believe that this position is as valid in the Pacific region as it is in the other areas of the world that has given rise to it.

We now turn to this active domain of cross-cultural and intercultural research.

Acculturation

With respect to the sociopolitical input to the ecocultural framework, I now examine the various ways in which individuals and groups can relate to, accommodate to, and adapt to, each other following contact as they carry out their daily lives in culturally diverse societies. In the contemporary world most societies are now culturally plural (including those in the Pacific region). Culturally, plural societies are those in which a number of different cultural or ethnic groups reside together within a shared political and social framework. It is clear that no society is made up of people having one culture, one language, and one identity (Ward & Leong, 2006). As a result, much interest in the relationship between culture and behaviour has become focused on 'Intercultural' or 'Acculturation' psychology (Sam & Berry, 2006; 2010). This enterprise is also being carried out comparatively.

Acculturation is the process of cultural and psychological change following contact between cultural groups and their individual members (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). These changes take place in all groups and all individuals in contact. Although one group is usually dominant over the others, successful outcomes require mutual accommodation among all groups and individuals living together in the diverse society.

The basic features of universalism in cross-cultural psychology are relevant to the study of acculturation. This is because in order for persons of different cultural backgrounds to interact with and to adapt to each other, they need to share some basic psychological features (processes and capacities). Even though their competencies and performances may differ greatly across cultures and individuals, these basic psychological features enable individuals and groups to interact with, and to understand each other. These commonalities are required in order to achieve mutual accommodation within plural societies.

Much of the research on acculturation and intercultural relations has been carried out in settler societies, ones that have largely been built upon immigration (e.g., Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United States). A key research question is whether findings from these societies apply to nation states that have long-established

national cultures, such as those in Europe and Asia. Comparative research on acculturation and settlement is essential in order to answer this question.

The issue of the continuing reality of cultural pluralism, and the assumption of eventual cultural homogenisation is one that is central to our discussion. There are two contrasting, usually implicit, models of intercultural relations in plural societies and institutions. In one (the melting pot model), the view is that there is (or should be) one dominant society, on the margins of which are various minority groups; these groups typically remain there unless they are incorporated as indistinguishable components into the 'mainstream'. Many societies have this implicit model, including France (where the image is of the 'unity of the hexagon'; that is, of one people within the borders of the country: see Sabatier & Boutry, 2006), and the United States (where the motto is 'e pluribus unum' or 'out of many, one'; see Nguyen, 2006).

In the other (the *multicultural* model), there is a national social framework of institutions (called the *larger society*) that accommodates the interests and needs of the numerous cultural groups, and which are fully incorporated as *ethnocultural groups* into this national framework. In dealing with this issue, I use the concept of the *larger society,* which refers to the civic arrangement in a plural society, within which all ethnocultural groups (dominant and non-dominant, indigenous and immigrant) attempt to carry out their lives together. It is constantly changing, through negotiation, compromise and mutual accommodations. It surely does not repre-

sent the way of life of the 'mainstream', which is typically that preferred by the dominant group, and which became established in the public institutions that they created. All groups in such a conception of a larger society are ethnocultural groups (rather than 'minorities'), who possess cultures and who have equal cultural and other rights, regardless of their size or power. In such complex plural societies, there is no assumption that some groups should assimilate or become absorbed into another group. Hence, intercultural relations and change are not viewed as unidirectional, but as mutual and reciprocal. This is the conception that has informed the multicultural vision in Canada (1971), and more recently, in the European Union (2005).

Both implicit models refer to possible arrangements in plural societies: the mainstream-minority view is that cultural pluralism is a problem and should be reduced, even eliminated; the multicultural view is that cultural pluralism is a resource, and inclusiveness should be nurtured with supportive policies and programs.

It is essential to note that the concept of multiculturalism and of the multiculturalism policy have two simultaneous and equally important emphases: the maintenance of heritage cultures and identities (the 'cultural' component) and the full and equitable participation of all ethnocultural groups in the life of the larger society (the 'social' component). Together, and in balance with each other, it should be possible to achieve the multicultural vision. However, in some societies (e.g., many countries in Europe, and the United States) there is a common misunderstanding that multicultural-
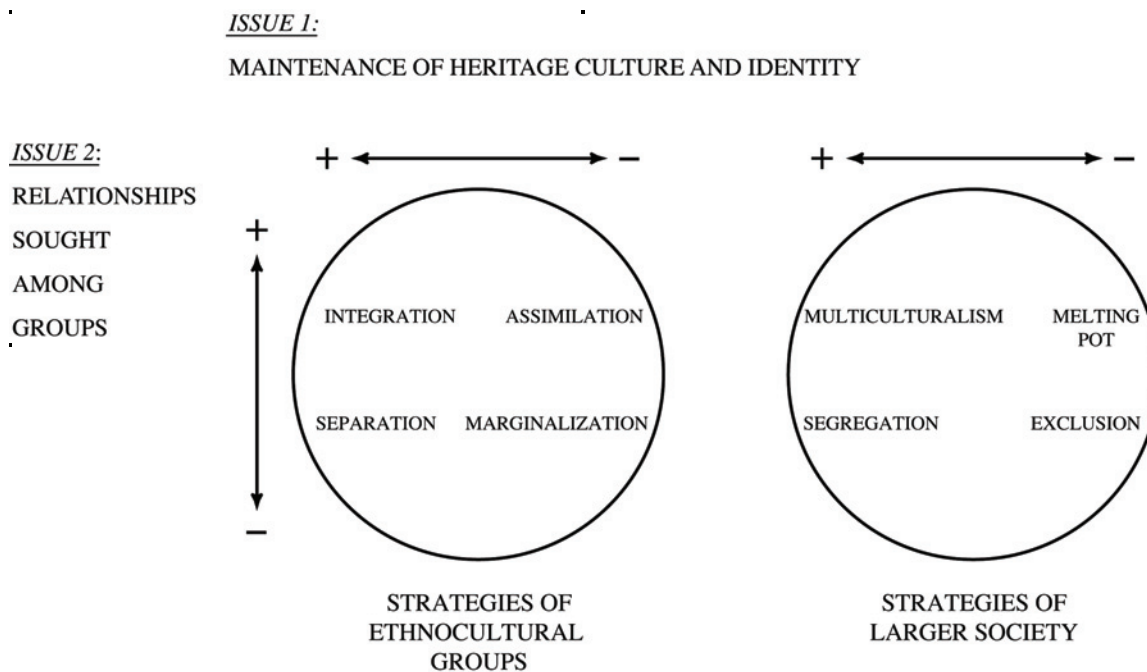

Figure 1

Varieties of intercultural strategies in ethnocultural groups and in the larger society.

ism means only the presence of many independent cultural communities in a society (only cultural maintenance), without their equitable participation and incorporation into a larger society. It is this erroneous view that has led some in Europe to declare that 'multiculturalism has failed'. However, it has not failed because it has not even been tried.

Intercultural Strategies

Four ways of engaging in intercultural relations have been derived from two basic issues facing all peoples in culturally plural societies. These issues are based on the distinction between orientations towards one's own group, and those towards other groups (Berry, 1970, 1974, 1980). This distinction is rendered as a relative preference for (1) maintaining one's heritage culture and identity and (2) a relative preference for having contact with and participating in the larger society along with other ethnocultural groups. These are the same two issues that underlie the Canadian multiculturalism policy outlined above.

These two issues can be responded to attitudinal dimensions, ranging from generally positive or negative orientations to these issues; their intersection defines four strategies, portrayed in Figure 1. On the left are the orientations from the point of view of ethnocultural peoples (both individuals and groups); on the right are the views held by the larger society.

Among ethnocultural groups, when they do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures, the Assimilation strategy is defined. In contrast, when individuals place a value on holding on to their original culture, and at the same time wish to avoid interaction with others, then the Separation alternative is defined. When there is an interest in both maintaining one's original culture, while in daily interactions with other groups, Integration is the option. In this case, there is some degree of cultural integrity maintained, while at the same time seeking, as a member of an ethnocultural group, to participate as an integral part of the larger social network. Finally, when there is little possibility or interest in cultural maintenance (often for reasons of exclusion or discrimination) then Marginalisation is defined.

These two basic issues were initially approached from the point of view of the non-dominant ethnocultural groups. However, there is a powerful role played by the dominant group in influencing the way in which ethnocultural groups would relate (Berry, 1974). The addition of the views of the larger society produces the right side of Figure 1. From the point of view of the larger society, Assimilation when sought by the dominant group is termed the 'melting pot'. When Separation is forced by the dominant group it is called 'Segregation'. Marginalisation, when imposed by the dominant group is termed 'exclusion'. Finally, when diversity maintenance and equitable participation are a widely accepted feature of the society as a whole, Integration is called 'multiculturalism'.

These intercultural strategies are related to a number of psychological and social factors. The most important is the discrimination experienced by an individual; less discrimination is usually reported by those opting for integration and assimilation, while more is experienced by those opting for separation or marginalisation (see Berry et al., 2006, study of immigrant youth reviewed below). This is an example of the reciprocity of intercultural attitudes found in the literature (Berry, 2006); if persons (such as immigrants or members of ethnocultural groups) feel rejected by others in the larger society, they reciprocate this rejection by choosing a strategy that avoids contact with others outside their own group. In the same study, the reasons for migration also played a role; refugees who flee their society tend to adopt a positive orientation to the society of settlement (through assimilation), while guest workers, who are often only in a new place temporarily, tend to adopt a separation strategy (Berry, 2010). There is also evidence that personality factors are closely linked to intercultural strategies (Schmitz & Berry, 2010). For integration, the personality factors of sociability, open-mindedness, task-orientation and emotional clarity were all positively related. For assimilation, agreeable, friendly and neuroticism-anxiety and avoidance were positively correlated; aggression was negatively correlated. For separation there was a negative correlation with sociability and open-mindedness, and a positive correlation with avoidance. Marginalisation correlated positively with impulsiveness, hostility-aggression, avoidance orientation and distraction, and negatively with emotional intelligence.

In acculturation research, there are three basic issues:

1. How do people acculturate? Are there variations in the goals that societies, families, and individuals seek to achieve during the acculturation process? Are there variations that people experience, or variations in the end result that people attain? For many years this question seemed to be settled: the goal, the process, and the end result of acculturation was thought to be the inevitable absorption (assimilation) of non-dominant groups and individuals into the dominant society, leading to a culturally homogeneous society. However, there is now some agreement that there are alternatives. Despite this, there is no consensus on how many there are, on how distinct they are one from another, and how best to assess them. In most research, integration is found to be the preferred strategy. In some research with indigenous peoples and sojourners, separation is preferred. In a few studies with refugees, assimilation is preferred. In no studies is marginalisation preferred.

2. How well do people adapt? For many years it was thought that acculturating individuals inevitably encounter problems, and that these experiences result in

poor adaptation, mainly of a psychological nature. Much of this generalisation came from reports prepared by those professionals (mainly psychiatrists, social workers, counsellors and other clinicians) who were working with immigrants, who were in fact experiencing, and seeking help for, their problems.

3. What is the relationship between how they acculturate and how well they adapt? If there are variations in how people acculturate, and variations in how well they adapt, this third question inevitably arises. If there are systematic relationships, the possibility exists for some 'best practices' on how to acculturate in order to achieve better, rather than worse adaptations. The *integration hypothesis* proposes that the best adaptation will be among those who seek to integrate. To provide an example, this hypothesis will now be examined using the findings from a study of the acculturation and adaptation of immigrant youth (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006).

Empirical Evidence

Using a sample of over 5,000 immigrant youth settled in 13 countries, we found that there are four ways of acculturating. A number of intercultural variables were assessed. These included acculturation attitudes (preferences for integration, assimilation, separation and marginalisation) and cultural identities, language knowledge and use, and social relationships with peers (the latter all assessed with respect to both their heritage group and the national society). The most preferred way was *integration,* defined as being oriented to both their heritage cultures and their new society (36% of the sample exhibited this pattern). In this group, there was a positive attitude toward integration, positive identities with both cultural groups, knowledge and use of both languages, and friendships with members of both cultures. *Assimilation* was least preferred (19%); youth here exhibited a pattern on these variables of being oriented mainly to the new national society. *Separation* was in second place (23%), with a pattern of being oriented mainly to their heritage culture. *Marginalisation* was in third place (22%); these youth were uncertain how to acculturate, had negative identities with both cultural groups, had poor national language facility, and had few friends in either group.

Adaptation was assessed by two variables: *psychological wellbeing* (self-esteem, life satisfaction and lack of psychological problems, such as being sad or worrying frequently); and *sociocultural adaptation* (school adjustment, and lack of behaviour problems in the community, such as vandalism and petty theft). Of some interest is the relationship between the two forms of adaptation. In a structural equation model, the best fit was obtained when sociocultural adaptation preceded psychological adaptation, rather than the other way around. That is, doing well in school and the community

leads to better psychological wellbeing. Finally, it is important to note that there were no overall differences in either form of adaptation between national and immigrant youth.

However, there were important differences in both forms of adaptation, depending on how immigrant youth were acculturating. There were substantial relationships between *how* youth acculturate and *how well* they adapt: those with an integration profile had the best psychological and sociocultural adaptation outcomes, while those with a diffuse profile had the worst; in between, those with an ethnic profile had moderately good psychological adaptation but poorer sociocultural adaptation, while those with a national profile had moderately poor psychological adaptation, and slightly negative sociocultural adaptation. This pattern of results was largely replicated using structural equation modeling.

Of particular importance for our discussion is the relationship between how youth acculturate and how well they adapt, and another variable: *perceived discrimination*. This is important because such discrimination is the best indicator of the degree to which immigrant youth are permitted to participate equitably in the life of the larger society. Those in the integration cluster reported experiencing the least discrimination, and those in the diffuse cluster reported the most; in between, national cluster youth had moderately low discrimination, and ethnic cluster youth had moderately high discrimination. And in the structural equation model, the single most powerful variable predicting poor psychological and sociocultural adaptation was the degree of discrimination perceived by immigrant youth. Thus, the degree to which immigrant youth experience discrimination corresponds with their preferred acculturation strategy, and has a direct impact on their adaptation.

It appears that immigrant youth do better, both psychologically and socially (including at school), when they are able to achieve a balance in their relationships and in their developed competencies in both their heritage cultures and the new society in which they are now living. Being doubly engaged (i.e., differentiation in their social involvements) is a benefit. In contrast, marginalised youth are in a very difficult position, having limited engagement in any social network, experiencing substantial discrimination, and attaining poor psychological and social outcomes.

Beyond this single study, there is other evidence for this conclusion with immigrant youth (Berry & Sabatier, 2010) and from a meta-analysis of the relationship between how individuals acculturate their wellbeing (Benet-Martínez, 2010). This generalisation has been confirmed in a recent meta-analysis of findings across numerous studies (Benet-Martínez). This meta-analysis sampled 83 studies and 23,197 participants. The analysis confirmed the integration-adaptation relationship, but the strength of the relationship depended on the mea-

surement method used; the range was from .21 to .54 to .70 across three methods. In general, we can thus conclude that the more differentiated an individual's social and cultural engagements are during the acculturation process, the more positive their psychological and social wellbeing will be.

Conclusions

Public policies that encourage and support balanced relationships and competencies in intercultural situations are thus superior to other arrangements that may be proposed by politicians or practised by public institutions. These studies show that when individuals have a differentiated social network and are more differentiated psychologically, their wellbeing is superior to when they have a limited (one culture of the other) or no social engagements. Integration appears to be the most appropriate way to engage in intercultural relations and the ensuing acculturation in our culturally plural societies and neighbourhoods.

In the two main domains of culture contact (acculturation and intercultural relations), some general principles have emerged. These generalisations appear to be rooted in some common psychological processes, and are expressed in varied ways across cultures. This conclusion supports the theoretical position of universalism. In cross-cultural psychology, the perspective of universalism provides the basis for examining culture-behaviour links, and for engaging in intercultural relations. In intercultural psychology, in both the acculturation and relations domains, there are some general principles that permit the development of positive intercultural relationships.

These general principles provide a basis for the development and implementation of policies and programs that may lead to improved intercultural relations. As noted previously, the Canadian multiculturalism policy, and more recently that of the European Union (2005), has taken this approach. The European Union adopted a set of 'Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU'. It states that: 'Integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States'. That is, both the dominant and non-dominant groups need to engage in a process of change; not all changes are expected to be carried out by immigrants or other nondominant cultural groups.

Of greatest importance are the findings regarding the multiculturalism hypothesis: Security in one's own identity underlies the possibility of accepting 'others'. This acceptance includes being tolerant, accepting cultural diversity in society, and accepting immigrants and national minorities in that society. In contrast, threatening a group's or individual's identity and place in a plural society is likely to lead to hostility. Thus, mutual security is required for intercultural harmony to be achieved.

Attempting to secure a place for ones own group, while undermining the security of other groups, will lead to mutual hostility.

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