One of the central lessons to be learned from the study of cross-cultural psychology is that there are close links between the cultural context in which individuals grow up and the psychological characteristics that they develop. The question naturally arises: what happens to individuals when they come into contact with another culture, either by moving to another one (for example, by becoming immigrants or refugees), or by becoming colonized by a dominant culture (for example, by being an indigenous person in North America)? The answer is that people change, both culturally and psychologically, in numerous and various ways. To help describe these changes, anthropologists and psychologists have coined the term acculturation, literally meaning “to move toward a culture.” One of the more common features of acculturation is the experience of being stressed by such changes; and for this, cross-cultural psychologists have coined the term acculturative stress. In this chapter, we begin with an outline of what is known about acculturation itself; we then use this background as a basis for a discussion of acculturative stress.

John W. Berry is a Professor of Psychology at Queen’s University in Canada. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Edinburgh in 1966. He has been a lecturer at the University of Sydney, a Fellow of Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study, a visiting Professor at the Universite de Nice and the Universite de Geneve, and is a past president of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology. He is the author or editor of twenty books in the areas of cross-cultural, social, and cognitive psychology.
Perhaps the most useful way to identify the various orientations individuals may have toward acculturation is to note that two issues predominate in the daily life of most acculturating individuals. One pertains to the maintenance and development of one’s ethnic distinctiveness in society, deciding whether or not one’s own cultural identity and customs are of value and to be retained. The other issue involves the desirability of inter-ethnic contact, deciding whether relations with other groups in the larger society are of value and are to be sought. These two issues are essentially questions of values, and may be responded to on a continuous scale, from positive to negative. For conceptual purposes, however, they can be treated as dichotomous (“yes” and “no”) preferences, thus generating a fourfold model (see Figure 1). Each cell in this fourfold classification is considered to be an acculturation strategy or option available to individuals and to groups living together in a society; these are assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization.

When the first question is answered “no,” and the second is answered “yes” the assimilation option is defined, namely, relinquishing one’s cultural identity and moving into the larger society. This can take place by way of absorption of a nondominant group into an established dominant group; or it can be by way of the merging of many groups to form a new society, as in the “melting pot.” In either case, sooner or later a single relatively uniform culture evolves.

The integration option (two “yes” answers) implies the maintenance of the cultural integrity of the group, as well as the movement by the group to become an integral part of a larger societal framework. In this case there are a large number of distinguishable ethnic groups, all cooperating within a larger social system, resulting in the “mosaic” that is frequently promoted as an alternative to the “melting pot.” In this case, there is a plural society in which there are some core values and institutions, but also many cultural variations that are accepted and valued characteristics of the society.

When there are no relations with the larger society, and this is accompanied by maintenance of a distinct ethnic identity and traditions, another option is defined. Depending upon which group (the dominant or nondominant) controls the situation, this option may take the form either of segregation or separation. When the pattern is imposed by the dominant group, classic segregation to keep people in “their place” appears. On the other hand, the maintenance of a traditional way of life outside full participation in the larger society may derive from people’s desire to lead an independent existence, as in the case of separatist movements.

Finally, there is an option that is difficult to define precisely, possibly because it is accompanied by a good deal of collective and individual confusion and anxiety. It is characterized by striking out against the larger society and by feelings of alienation, and loss of identity. This option is marginalization, in which individuals lose cultural and psychological contact with both their traditional culture and the larger society.

It is possible to use this framework to examine acculturation orientations in a number of ways (see Figure 2). If we distinguish between dominant and nondominant groups, and between group and individual orientations, we observe four distinct ways in which to employ this framework in under-
ACCULTURATIVE STRESS

In a recent overview of this area of research (Berry et al., 1987), it was argued that stress may arise, but it is not inevitable during acculturation.

A framework for understanding acculturative stress is presented in Figure 3. On the left of the figure, acculturation occurs in a particular situation (e.g., migrant community or native settlement), and individuals participate in and experience these changes to varying degrees; thus, individual acculturation experience may vary from a great deal to rather little. In the middle, stressors may result from this varying experience of acculturation. For some people, acculturative changes may all be in the form of stressors, while for others, they may be benign or even seen as opportunities. On the right, varying levels of acculturative stress may become manifest as a result of acculturation experience and stressors.

The first point to note is that relationships among these three concepts (indicated by the solid horizontal arrows) all depend upon a number of moderating factors (indicated in the lower box), including the nature of the larger society, the type of acculturating group, the mode of acculturation being experienced, and a number of demographic, social, and psychological characteristics of the group and individual members. That is, each of these factors can influence the degree and direction of the relationships between the three phenomena at the top of Figure 3. This influence is indicated by the broken vertical arrows drawn between this set of “moderating” factors and the horizontal arrows. These moderating factors may be viewed as sources of variation at both group and individual levels. Each case will have to be considered independently.

Results of studies of acculturative stress have varied widely in the level of difficulties found in acculturating groups. Early views were that culture...
contact and change inevitably led to stress; however, current views (as depicted in Figure 3) are that stress is linked to acculturation in a probabilistic way, and the level of stress experienced will depend on a number of factors.

The first factor on which acculturative stress depends is one's acculturation strategy: those who feel marginalized tend to be highly stressed, and those who maintain a separation goal are often almost as stressed; in contrast, those who pursue integration are minimally stressed, with assimilation leading to intermediate levels. The phase of acculturation is also important: those in first contact, and those who have achieved some long-term adaptation tend to be less stressed than those caught in a conflict or crisis phase, especially, as we have noted, if they also feel marginalized.

Another moderating factor is the way in which the dominant society exerts its acculturative influences. One important distinction is the degree of pluralism present in a society (Murphy, 1965). Culturally plural societies, in contrast to culturally monistic ones, are likely to be characterized by two important factors: one is the availability of a network of social and cultural groups which may provide support for those entering into the experience of acculturation; and the other is a greater tolerance for, or acceptance of, cultural diversity. One might reasonably expect the stress of persons experiencing acculturation in plural societies to be lower than those in monistic societies that pursue assimilation.

In assimilationist societies, there are a number of factors operating that will plausibly lead to greater acculturative stress than in pluralistic societies. If a person regularly receives the message that one's culture, language, and identity are unacceptable, the impact on one's sense of security and self-esteem will clearly be negative. If one is told that the price of admission to full participation in the larger society is to no longer be what one has grown up to be, the psychological conflict is surely heightened. And if, collectively, one's group is offered admission only on terms specified by the dominant society, then the potential for social conflict is also increased. Thus, assimilationist policies and actions on the part of the larger society can be plausibly linked to greater acculturative stress when compared to integrationist policies.

A related factor, paradoxically, is the existence of policies designed to exclude acculturating groups from full participation in the larger society through acts of discrimination. To the extent that acculturating people wish to participate in the desirable features of the larger society (such as adequate housing, medical care, political rights), the denial of these may be cause for increased levels of acculturative stress.

A final set of social variables refers to the acceptance or prestige of one's group in the acculturation setting. In most societies, some groups are more acceptable on grounds of ethnicity, race, or religion than others. Those less acceptable run into barriers (prejudices, discrimination, exclusion) which may lead to marginalization of the group and which are likely to induce greater stress.

Beyond these social factors, numerous psychological variables may play a role in the mental health status of persons experiencing acculturation. Here again a distinction is useful between those characteristics which were present prior to contact, and those which developed during the process of acculturation. Certain experiences may predispose one to function more effectively under acculturative pressures. These are: prior knowledge of the new language and culture, prior intercultural encounters of any kind, motives for the contact (voluntary versus involuntary contact), and attitudes toward contact (that can range from positive to negative).

Contact experiences may also account for variations in acculturative stress. Whether they are pleasant (or unpleasant), whether they meet the current needs of the individual (or not), and in particular whether the first encounters are viewed positively (or not) may set the stage for all subsequent ones, and affect a person's mental health.

Among factors that appear during acculturation are the various acculturation strategies: as noted previously, individuals within a group do vary in their preference for assimilating, integrating, or separating. These variations, along with experiences of marginalization, are known to affect one's mental health (Berry et al., 1987).

The personal and societal outcomes of acculturative stress have been known for decades. At the personal level, reduced health (physical, social, and psychological), lowered levels of motivation, a sense of alienation, and increased social deviance have been documented. At the societal level, there are direct counterparts in increased health costs, lower educational and work attainment (with related higher welfare costs), increased social conflict (intrafamilial and intergroup), substance abuse, criminal activity, and a general societal malaise. Clearly, with these outcomes likely, policies that seek to avoid, or at least control high levels of accul-
CONCLUSION

It should be clear that a desire to participate in the larger society, or a desire for cultural maintenance, if thwarted, can lead to a serious decline in the mental health status of acculturating individuals. Policies or attitudes in the larger society that are discriminatory (not permitting participation, and leading to marginalization or segregation) or assimilationist (leading to enforced cultural loss) are all predictors of psychological problems. Acculturative stress is always a possible consequence of acculturation, but its probability of occurrence can be much reduced if both participation in the larger society and maintenance of one's heritage culture are welcomed by policy and practice of the larger society.

REFERENCES


