

SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF  
PERSONAL ACCULTURATION IN AN INTERCULTURAL  
ENVIRONMENT

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**Abstract:** *This article examines the phenomenon of acculturation as a complex and contradictory process of intercultural interaction caused by globalization and the intensification of migration and communication processes. It analyzes the main theoretical approaches to understanding acculturation in foreign cultural studies, ethnology, and ethnopsychology, beginning with the works of R. Redfield, R. Linton, and M. Herskovits. Particular attention is paid to acculturation strategies—assimilation, separation, marginalization, and integration—and their psychological consequences for individuals and groups. The role of ethnic identity, ethnic tolerance, empathy, and intercultural communication in ensuring successful acculturation and adaptation of individuals in a different cultural environment is explored. It is argued that integration is the most productive acculturation strategy, contributing to the development of bicultural and multicultural personalities and the harmonization of intercultural relations.*

**Key words:** *acculturation, globalization, intercultural interaction, intercultural communication, cultural identity, ethnic identity, tolerance, integration, assimilation, marginalization, adaptation, empathy, multiculturalism.*

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The scale, irreversibility, and contradictory nature of intercultural interaction driven by globalization have generated growing scholarly interest in studying its nature, patterns, and trends. To describe this process and its consequences, the concept of acculturation (acculturation is an English neologism from the Latin *ad* – "to" and *cultura* – "cultivation, education, development" [1, p. 149]) has been used in English-language scientific literature since the late 19th century. Nineteenth-century American ethnologist D. Powell and early 20th-century ethnographers and ethnopsychologists W. Homes, R. Thurnwald, R. Redfield, R. Linton, and M. Herskovits defined acculturation as the result of direct and prolonged cultural contact between one group of individuals and another, altering the cultural paradigms of both groups.

Cultural studies lack a unified understanding of the nature of acculturation processes. The following key positions can be identified:

1. A certain portion of the scientific community reduces the essence of acculturation to the creation of a single world culture/civilization, which is conditioned by the spread of the achievements of Western civilization;
2. Acculturation is also understood as the growing interrelationship of various cultures, which does not, however, generate a new culture, but is built either on the dominance of one of them or on their "concert" [2, p. 30];
3. Scientists also propose more complex schemes, such as achieving a common consciousness that includes projections of the global world produced by local civilizations [3, p. 70].

Of course, each of these positions has its own justification. The implementation of any given scenario depends on a multitude of factors, both objective and subjective. Clearly, clarifying the directions and modes of acculturation processes has not only theoretical but also important practical significance: it will allow for timely adjustments to the behavioral strategies of

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people bearing a particular ethnic culture and the establishment of effective interactions between the subjects of acculturation.

The interaction of cultures not only involves mutual complementarity but also the affirmation of the distinctiveness and specificity of each party. Borrowing the best cultural examples facilitates mutual adaptation between cultures. People who have lived in another country for an extended period of time, whether scientists or those involved in business, emigrants, or refugees—that is, those who come into contact with a foreign culture—require adaptation to that culture. As a result of the rather complex process of acculturation, a person achieves, to a greater or lesser extent, compatibility with the new cultural environment.

The study of acculturation processes was initiated by American scholars in the early 20th century (R. Redfield, R. Linton, M. Herskovits). It was within the framework of their theory that the concept of the United States as a melting pot of cultures emerged, according to which the cultures of peoples arriving in the United States blend in this melting pot, resulting in the formation of a single, homogeneous American culture. According to their views, the processes of change in the original cultural patterns occur automatically, thereby achieving a state of cultural and ethnic homogeneity.

Later, this process came to be viewed as a change in an individual's value orientations, role behavior, and social attitudes. Currently, the term acculturation is used to describe the process by which the mutual influence of different cultures is associated with the adoption of the norms, values, and traditions of another culture (the donor culture) by all or some members of one culture (the recipient culture).

Acculturation occurs when each individual simultaneously strives to preserve their cultural identity and integrate into another culture. Four main

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acculturation strategies are most common: assimilation, separation, marginalization, and integration.

Assimilation is associated with a comprehensive, full acceptance of the values and norms of another culture while rejecting one's own norms and values.

Separation is the rejection of a foreign culture while maintaining cultural identification with one's own culture. Separation is expressed in the emergence of a certain degree of isolation from the dominant culture. If the dominant culture insists on this, i.e., forced separation is called "segregation."

Marginalization means a loss of identity with one's own culture and a lack of identity with the majority (dominant) culture. This is associated with the inability to maintain one's own identity and a lack of desire to develop a new identity with another culture.

Integration is defined as identifying with both the old and the new foreign culture.

Until recently, many researchers believed that assimilation was the preferred mechanism for integrating into the dominant culture. Today, the goal of acculturation is considered to be achieving integration, enabling the development of a multicultural personality. However, this is possible only with mutual agreement regarding this acculturation strategy.

The success of the acculturation process is psychologically determined by positive ethnic identity and ethnic tolerance. Integration is viewed as a positive balance of these components, while assimilation is defined as negative ethnic identity and positive tolerance. Separation is defined as positive ethnic identity and negative tolerance. Marginalization is defined as negative ethnic identity and negative tolerance. According to numerous researchers, emigrants arriving permanently (as opposed to those staying temporarily) are focused on assimilation. For those who arrived for education or economic reasons, this

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process proceeds relatively easily. Meanwhile, refugees, forced to leave their homeland for external reasons, psychologically resist severing ties with it, and the assimilation process is much longer and more difficult for them.

Until recently, researchers believed that the best acculturation strategy was complete assimilation into the dominant culture. Today, the goal of acculturation is considered to be achieving cultural integration, resulting in a bicultural or multicultural personality.

This is possible if the interacting majority and minority groups voluntarily choose this strategy. The integrating group is willing to embrace the attitudes and values of the new culture, and the dominant group is willing to accommodate these individuals, respecting their rights and values, and adapting social institutions to the needs of these groups.

Preserving the ethnic identity of the integrating group, which was previously viewed as complicating the acculturation process, is now viewed positively, as it helps smooth the process. This is especially important for refugees (involuntary migrants).

It is generally believed that the non-dominant group and its members are free to choose their acculturation strategy, but this is not always the case. The dominant group may limit the choices of these individuals or force them into certain forms of acculturation. Thus, we have already discussed how separation may be the choice of a non-dominant group. But if separation is forced, that is, it arises as a result of discriminatory actions by the dominant majority, then it becomes segregation. If people choose assimilation, they are prepared to embrace the idea of a "melting pot" of cultures. But if they are forced, the "melting pot" becomes a crushing pressure. It is quite rare for a minority group to choose marginalization. More often, people become marginalized as a result of attempts to combine forced assimilation with forced segregation.

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Integration can only be voluntary, on the part of both the minority and the majority. After all, it represents the mutual adaptation of these groups, the recognition by both groups of the right of each to live as a culturally distinct people.

It is believed that the success of acculturation, psychologically, is determined by positive ethnic identity and ethnic tolerance. Integration corresponds to positive ethnic identity and ethnic tolerance, assimilation to negative ethnic identity and ethnic tolerance, separation to positive ethnic identity and intolerance, and marginalization to negative ethnic identity and intolerance.

The result and goal of acculturation is long-term adaptation to life in a foreign culture. In sociocultural terms, this consists of the ability to freely navigate a new culture and society. Psychological adaptation represents the achievement of psychological satisfaction within the new culture. However, adaptation can be an extremely difficult and ineffective process. It depends significantly on psychological and sociocultural factors, both of which depend on a person's conviction (orientation) in the advantages and success of the integration strategy.

Acculturation should be considered within the context of the communication process. Like the process of enculturation, acculturation occurs as a result of communication and interaction with the surrounding environment (personal and social interaction).

The problems of acculturation can be considered in relation to such mechanisms of cultural transmission as interpenetration, borrowing, and superposition. The most important processes occur in the area of cognition: the processes of perceiving information and processing it. Naturally, these processes are linked to the individual's intellectual potential and cognitive activity.

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One of the specific aspects of acculturation is affective reactions to certain elements of other cultures, as they are accompanied by great psychological stress, anxiety, and fear. Moreover, it is characteristic that representatives of foreign cultures more easily establish connections with groups in individualistic cultures compared to collectivistic cultures. As relationships develop, this effect significantly diminishes.

An important component of affective communication is empathy—the ability to see the world from another person's perspective and share their experiences and feelings. In communication, this manifests itself as sensitivity to the other person's emotional needs, the ability to understand their verbal and nonverbal expressions of feelings, and a willingness to share these feelings, including responding to the other party's emotional need in a way that is appropriate and beneficial to the other person. In this case, empathy and tolerance are the behavioral strategies chosen.

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