



Multi-group analysis of the MIDA model: Acculturation of Indian and Russian immigrants to Canada

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of the study is to test the Multi-Dimensional Individual Difference Acculturation (MIDA) model with first generation immigrants in Canada. The model incorporates individual level factors that are formulated in the previous acculturation models and includes, Resilience, Self-perceived Cultural Competence, and perception of social support from the larger society and ethnic community, Family Allocentrism, Ethnic Identity, and Hassles as predictor variables of acculturation adaptation. Acculturation strategies were included as intermediate between the predictor and adaptation outcomes. The model was tested with 168 Russian and 114 Indian immigrants living in Metropolitan Toronto, Canada. The similarities and differences between the two groups with regard to psychosocial factors examined in the MIDA model are discussed.

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1. Introduction

Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) defined acculturation as cultural and psychological changes that happen in cultural groups as a result of direct contact between them. As immigrants experience the process of acculturation, they may learn the parameters of a new culture so that they can behave appropriately in, or benefit from social opportunities within, the new society (Searle & Ward, 1990). At the same time, immigrants may begin to discard aspects of their previous culture that are no longer effective (Berry, 2003, 2005). The negotiation (within individuals and groups) between their level of participation in the new culture and their maintenance of their heritage culture is the framework for acculturation research (Berry, 2003).

Although destination countries are shaped by increasingly diverse immigrant populations, the impact of cultural transition and change is more immediate for the immigrants themselves. The changes that can occur for an immigrant who is adapting to a new culture occur within two spheres, leading to two types, or levels, of adaptation: psychological and sociocultural. Psychological adaptation refers to changes within a person who is a participant in an intercultural contact, which is regarded as potentially stressful (Berry & Safdar, 2007) and is related to the literature on stress and coping (Berry, 1997). Sociocultural adaptation (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward, 1997; Ward & Rana-deuba, 1999) refers to competence in the activities of daily intercultural living (Ward, 1996).

There are individual-, situation- and culture-specific factors that affect adaptation, but it has also been suggested that there may be core, or shared, factors that are relevant to the adaptation of immigrants in a variety of contexts (Safdar, Lay, & Struthers, 2003; Safdar, Struthers, & van Oudenhoven, 2009; Ward & Kennedy, 1993). There are many challenges that most immigrants have in common. This being the case, it is likely that the process of adaptation will have some characteristics that are common to different cultural groups and situations.

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1.1. The Multi-Dimensional Individual Difference Acculturation (MIDA) model

The MIDA model is an attempt to integrate core variables predicting the adaptation of immigrants. Major acculturation models and theories were reviewed and elements of these models and theories were combined. Specifically, the MIDA model incorporates individual level factors that are formulated around the acculturation framework proposed by Berry which includes acculturation strategies, stress caused by acculturation, and changes in behaviour in the new society (Berry, 1990; Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989). Unlike the Interactive Acculturation Model (Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault, & Sénécal, 1997), Relative Acculturation Extended Model (Navas et al., 2005), and Pointkowski et al.'s model (Pointkowski & Florack, 1995; Pointkowski, Florack, Hoelker, & Obdržálek, 2000; Pointkowski, Rohman, & Florack, 2002), the MIDA model does not focus on both immigrants and the larger society (i.e., subordinate and dominate groups), although we acknowledge that acculturation adaptation is contingent upon the sociocultural reality of the larger society. The MIDA model is aimed at examining dispositions and psychosocial indicators within immigrant groups that influence acculturative adaptation. Therefore, we have examined psychosocial variables relevant to immigrant groups including resources (e.g., language skill, perception of social support) and impediments (e.g., perception of Hassles). These variables were grouped empirically and theoretically into two composite predictive factors and one measured variable in the MIDA model.

Psychosocial Resources (previously called Psychosocial Adjustment; Safdar et al., 2003) is a composite variable that includes personal Resilience, Self-perceived Cultural Competence, and social support from the larger society, grouped for their statistical coherence. This dimension of the model is based on positive psychological functioning (Ryff & Singer, 1996) and includes social support and individual characteristics (such as perceived competence) that have been shown to be relatively stable and influential in acculturation (Ward, Okura, Kennedy & Kojima, 1998).

The second composite predictor variable is Co-national Connectedness, consisting of Ethnic Identity, Family Allocentrism, and perceived Ingroup Social Support (Safdar et al., 2003). These are also resources but the variables constituting Co-national Connectedness are all concerned with Ingroup connections (co-national and familial), whereas the composite variable Psychosocial Resources consists of resources that are internal to the person (psychological resilience and perceived Cultural Competence) or resources deriving from the larger society (Outgroup support). Co-national Connectedness refers to the strength of an individual's Ingroup ties and is partly derived from ethnic identification theory (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Phinney, 1996). The distinction between social support from an individual's ethnic community (Ingroup) and support from the larger society (Outgroup) is a crucial element of the MIDA model, as they load on separate factors (Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, Jaakkola, & Reuter, 2006; Safdar et al., 2003).

Hassles, chronic irritants that individuals meet on a frequent basis, constitute the third predictor variable in the model. These may include acculturation-specific irritants and general daily Hassles that any person, migrant or not, may face (Lay & Nguyen, 1998). This dimension of the model reflects the importance of Hassles and psychological distress in adaptation (DeLongis, Coyne, Dakof, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1982; Nguyen, 2006).

Acculturation strategies, which are based on Berry's acculturation framework (1980; Safdar et al., 2003), constitute the next stage of the MIDA model, intermediate between the predictor variables described above and adaptation outcomes. These may be viewed as two variables: the motivation to engage with the immigrant's original culture and with the new culture (as in, for example, Safdar, Rasmi, Dupuis, & Lewis, 2009; Safdar, Struthers, et al., 2009). Alternatively, as these two motivations lead to four possible strategies (Assimilation, Integration, Separation, Marginalization), up to four separate strategies can be measured.

The MIDA framework, with Psychosocial Resources, Co-National Connectedness and Hassles as predictors of both Acculturation Attitudes and the outcome variables Outgroup Contact, Ingroup Contact and Psychophysical Distress has been supported empirically, but not uniformly (Rasmi, Safdar & Lewis, 2009; Safdar et al., 2003; Safdar, Rasmi, et al., 2009; Safdar, Struthers, et al., 2009), suggesting that it presents a framework of core factors applicable to a number of different samples: Iranians in Canada (Safdar et al., 2003) and in the United Kingdom, the United States and the Netherlands (Safdar, Struthers, et al., 2009), and rural and urban immigrants (of diverse origins) to Canada (Safdar, Rasmi, et al., 2009). The model has also been tested longitudinally amongst sojourners (international students) in Canada (Rasmi et al., 2009), confirming that the statistical predictions in the model translate into temporal prediction: that, for example, Psychosocial Resources predict Psychophysical Distress both in a statistical model and over time, rather than the other way round (distress predicting resources).

Support is also provided by a similar, but independently derived, theoretical model proposed by Arends-Toth and van de Vijver (2006). Their model is a comprehensive summation of acculturation research that includes similar predictor and outcome variables to those in the MIDA model, that are connected by attitudinal acculturation variables using Berry's framework. Although not identical, the broad similarity of two models that were developed quite independently and using entirely different approaches, adds some validation to both.

The extent to which the core variables and their relationships in the MIDA model are generalizable requires continued testing, particularly as not all paths are significant in all cases. The hypotheses for the current study were derived from previous empirical findings. Other relations that have been significant amongst specific samples, but with little consistency, were not used as the basis for hypotheses in the present study as we are seeking to identify the robust relations between core factors.

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