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International Journal of Intercultural Relations

29 (2005) 251–272

International Journal of
INTERCULTURAL
RELATIONS

www.elsevier.com/locate/ijintrel

The role of demographic variables and acculturation attitudes in predicting sociocultural and psychological adaptation in Moroccans in the Netherlands

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Abstract

The goals of the present study were two-fold: (i) to test the independence of the attitudes of second-generation migrants toward their culture of origin and toward the culture of the host society; and (ii) to test a path model in which these acculturation attitudes moderate and/or mediate the relationship between demographic factors (age, gender, occupation, education, and length of stay) and acculturation outcomes (including psychological adjustment, as measured by mental health and sociocultural acculturation as measured by school success, work success). Both hypotheses were to a large extent confirmed in a group of 155 second-generation Moroccans in the Netherlands. The results suggest that the two underlying dimensions of acculturation attitudes were largely independent across migrants and slightly negatively related within migrants; furthermore, there were some indications that ethnic culture was to some extent more liked in the personal domain and the host culture more in the public domain. Acculturation attitudes mediated the relationship between demographic variables and sociocultural adaptation. In turn, sociocultural adaptation mediated the relationship between acculturation attitudes and psychological adaptation. The results showed also that sociocultural and psychological adaptation had their own predictors; psychological

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adaptation was directly predicted by background variables while sociocultural adaptation was directly predicted by acculturation attitudes.

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Keywords: Acculturation; Sociocultural adaptation; Psychological adaptation; Moroccans; The Netherlands

1. Introduction

The current study examines two aspects of acculturation. The first involves the structure of acculturation attitudes. Specifically, the question addressed is whether attitudes (of second-generation Moroccans in the Netherlands) toward the ethnic and the host culture are independent. Independence of ethnic and host culture means that the scores on attitudes toward one culture are not related to the scores on the second culture; the correlation between the two scores is insignificant. The second involves the often claimed, but infrequently tested, moderating or mediating role of acculturation attitudes. A path model is tested in which acculturation attitudes moderate or mediate the relationship between background factors, such as gender and length of stay in the host country, and acculturation outcomes.

1.1. *Models of acculturation attitudes*

Two models of acculturation are dominant: The unidimensional model and the bidimensional model. In the unidimensional model, attitudes toward the culture of origin and host society are dependent. There are two variants within the unidimensional model namely, the assimilation variant and the bicultural variant. According to the assimilation variant, complete absorption in the mainstream culture is the unavoidable outcome of migration, and cross-cultural travellers end up losing their ethnic feelings and cultural characteristics in favour of the embracement of the host culture (e.g., Gordon, 1964; Olmeda, 1979). The bicultural variant, on the other hand, views biculturalism, the simultaneous adherence to both cultures, as a possible outcome (e.g., Shadid, 1979; Wong-Rieger & Quintana, 1989). Although the bicultural variant is favoured over the assimilation variant for making room for the possibility of actually managing cultural differences, it is criticised for failing to distinguish between real biculturalism, in which cross-cultural travellers wish to associate with both mainstream and minority culture, and double alienation, in which they wish to dissociate from both.

The second model, known as the bidimensional acculturation model, considers ethnic and host identities as independent. Adherence to both identities yields “integration” (real biculturalism), adherence to none yields “marginalization” (double alienation), there is “separation” when one favours only one’s own ethnic identity, and finally there is “assimilation” when one favours only the host identity (e.g., Berry, 1974, 1984, 1994). Berry’s acculturation model has gained support and the four acculturation strategies turn out to have a good descriptive and explanatory

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