

Identity formation and Acculturation of Immigrant Young Adults



Sayeeda Shah, Randal Tonks & Steven Lowe

Introduction

- Ego-Identity statuses have been examined for decades in terms of the development of ego strengths in a variety of domains (Marcia, 1993).
- The statuses are defined by the questions of ego identity as according to Figure 1.

		Is there Identity Commitment?	
		Yes	No
Is there Identity Search?	Yes	Achievement	Moratorium
	No	Foreclosure	Diffusion

- Acculturation and ethnic identity have also been widely examined (Berry, 2006) where acculturative styles have been shown to relate to various forms of Ethnic Identity Development (Phinney, Berry, Vedder & Liebkind, 2006) and Ego-Identity Development (Tonks & Paranjpe, 1999).
- Figure 2 shows Berry's styles of Acculturation:

Berry's Scheme of Acculturative Attitudes Styles (Berry, 2006)			
		Is it considered to be of value to maintain cultural identity and characteristics?	
		Yes	No
Is it considered to be of value to maintain relationships with other (host) groups	Yes	Integration	Assimilation
	No	Separation	Marginalisation

- The present study examines the four styles of Acculturation along with the four Ego-Identity Statuses and how they relate to acculturative stress.
- The study also illustrates key characteristics of each style.

Method

➤ Participants

- 16 participants were interviewed in this study.
- They were recruited from Camosun College and by postings placed on public community boards.
- There were 9 females and 7 males, ranging in age from 17 to 48 with an average age of 25 years.

➤ Material and Apparatus

- The present study makes use of the revised *Ego-Identity Status Interview* to examine both Ego Identity Statuses and Acculturative Styles.
- Audio recordings were made of each interview for later scoring.

➤ Procedure

- The participants were each interviewed in a one on one bases by one of the researchers in a quiet room setting .
- The interview consisted of an introduction and topics of ethnicity and two of the following content areas: religion, politics, gender roles or sexuality.

Results

➤ Inter-rater reliability

- Interviews were scored individually, by two raters for dominant styles and statuses.
- Post rating comparison revealed a 90% agreement between raters, prior to comparing results and agreeing upon a final classification.

➤ Integration (9)

- An integrative style expressed in an interview was *"I feel I can say a lot more about Canadian values... I have integrated them automatically with my own... To a great extent I would now also consider myself Canadian"*
- *"By feeling I belong, I feel very integrated... I simply feel a part of Canadian culture... I still feel connected to the Serbian tradition"*
- These individuals also tended to have identity that is achieved ego-identity status (7) then moratorium (2).
- This style is seen in the long term as positive in regards to reducing stress
- It was noted that people from central Europe (Germany and Poland) and parts of Eurasia (Turkey, Serbia and Russia) were more likely to integrate in to the host country culture.
- This was most likely because the culture is not a major deviation to that of those countries.

➤ Assimilation (1)

- This style suggests that one will accept the mainstream culture, giving up on their traditions.
- There was one case in this study that was seen as assimilating into the host country in regards to ethnicity. He also reflected a foreclosed status.

➤ Separation (5)

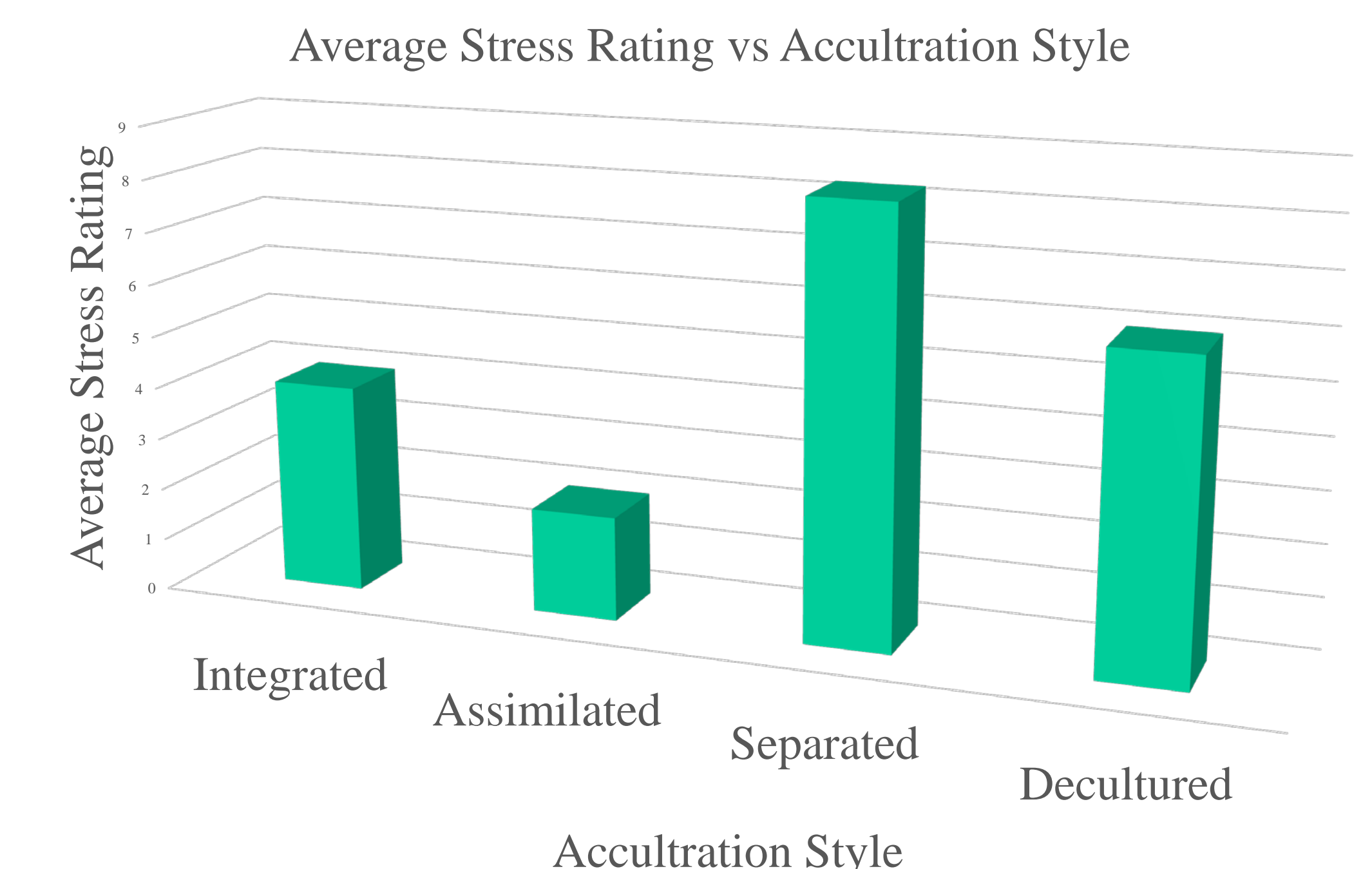
- An individual who is separated was likely to say something like *"I don't feel like I'm in Canada. Canada to me is a land, that's it... in Egypt 99 percent of people in Egypt are Egyptian."*
- *"In Canada its more about character, in Egypt its more than that"*
- One individual said *"I don't feel like I much belong"*
- Participants from China, Hong Kong and Egypt were seen as separated, which was mostly believed to be because of the cultural differences between the country of origin and host country.
- They also tended to reflect a foreclosed ego-identity status.
- Participants expressing this style scored higher on reported levels of stress

➤ Decultured (1)

- The decultured style is a less stressed version of marginalization, not accepting a culture per se.,
- One participant did say *"I'm not Canadian, I'm not American"* as well as *"before I thought about it, it didn't really matter and now that I have thought about it, it still doesn't matter"* in regard to belonging to an ethnic group.

➤ Stress

- The most common trend that was found was the individuals who were integrated had lower levels of overall stress than the others.
- The individuals who were separated tended to have higher stress levels than the others.
- The differences are seen in the graph below.



Discussion

- It was discovered that individuals that had integrated to the host country had lower stress levels then those that were separated.
- Ego-identity statuses also tended to align with the acculturative styles, where integration and achieved were associated and separation with foreclosure were common patterns.
- While some national differences were seen in this data, however a larger sample would also be advantages to more carefully examine the relationship between country or origin and acculturative style, ego-identity and stress.
- The focus of this study was on ethnicity and stress levels, but the identity domains of: religion, politics, occupation, gender roles and sexuality were also examined.
- The domain of ethnicity from the interview did however play a larger more distinguished role in the differences in stress level.
- Further programs should be considered or established to help immigrants integrate into the Canadian society to help alleviate acculturative stress.

Contact :

Sayeeda Shah ShahS@hotmail.ca
 Randal Tonks tonks@camosun.bc.ca
 Steven Lowe Stevenlowe1986@gmail.com