Many immigrants experience cultural and psychological changes when attempting to integrate into a new country. This process is known as acculturation. A number of different factors are associated with successful adjustment into a new culture, including length of residence in the new country, level of education, immigrants’ competence with a new culture, and their stress and perceived hassles. The Multidimensional Individual Difference Acculturation (MIDA) model was created to better understand adjustment of immigrants in a new society. In this model, successful adjustment is measured using three outcomes: In-Group Contact (with people in ethnic group), Out-Group Contact (with people in larger society), and lack of Psychophysical Distress (psychological and health problems). Three factors are used to predict adjustment: Psychosocial Resources (psychological well-being and support by host country), Connectedness (strength of ethnic identity and support by family/ethnic group), and Hassles (amount of stress from daily life and being an immigrant). The MIDA model also takes into account attitudes of immigrants towards their heritage culture (Own Culture Maintenance) and towards the larger society (New Culture Acquisition).

What is this research about?
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What did the researchers do?
238 Iranian immigrants (94 in the UK, 64 in the US, and 80 in the Netherlands) were given questionnaires and scored on each of the outcome variables (In-Group Contact, Out-Group Contact, and Psychophysical Distress), predictive variables (Psychosocial Resources, Connectedness, and Hassles), and attitudes to acculturation (Own Culture Maintenance and New Culture Acquisition). Next, the researchers used a statistical technique known as structural equation modeling (SEM) to determine the relationships among the different variables. Finally, the reliability of the model was tested by determining the accuracy of four predictions made at the start of the study.

What you need to know:
The experiences of Iranian immigrants in the US, UK, and the Netherlands showed that immigrants with high levels of Psychosocial Resources and attitudes of Connectedness were most successful at adjusting into a new culture. The Multidimensional Individual Difference Acculturation (MIDA) model was generally successful at predicting which immigrant groups had better adjustment into the larger society.

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What did the researchers find?
Psychosocial Resources, Connectedness, and Hassles together explained 73% of the variation in acculturation outcomes in the Iranian-British, 76% in the Iranian-American, and 69% in the Iranian-Dutch. As predicted, immigrants with high levels of Psychosocial Resources were more likely to have a positive attitude towards the host society, have contact with members of the out-group, and were less likely to report Psychophysical Distress. Similarly, immigrants with high Connectedness scores had more positive attitudes towards Own Culture Maintenance and were more involved with their own ethnic group. The predicted link between Hassles and Psychophysical Distress was not supported, while the predicted link between attitudes and In-Group/Out-Group Contact had mixed support.

How can you use this research?
Immigration policymakers can use this research to better understand the factors that influence whether new immigrants successfully integrate into their adopted country and accept its broader culture. Cross-cultural psychologists can further this research by evaluating the MIDA model in other immigrant populations and adopted countries/cultures, and by evaluating this model over different time scales.

Keywords:
Acculturation, immigrants, Iranians, assimilation, culture, societal integration

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