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Seth J. Schwartz

Marilyn J. Montgomery

Ervin Briones

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The Role of Identity in Acculturation among Immigrant People: Theoretical Propositions, Empirical Questions, and Applied Recommendations

Seth J. Schwartz Marilyn J. Montgomery Ervin Briones

Key Words

Acculturation · Cultural identity · Immigrant · Personal identity · Social identity

Abstract

The present paper advances theoretical propositions regarding the relationship between acculturation and identity. The most central thesis argued is that acculturation represents changes in cultural identity and that personal identity has the potential to 'anchor' immigrant people during their transition to a new society. The article emphasizes the experiences of nonwhite, non-Western immigrant people moving to Western nations. The article also calls for research on heretofore unexplored aspects of the relationship of acculturation to personal and social identity. Ideas are proposed for interventions to promote cultural identity change and personal identity coherence.

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In recent decades, labor mobility and population migration have become prominent (and presumably permanent) in many parts of the world [van de Vijver & Phalet, 2004]. This means that many people in the world, whether by choice, necessity, or coercion, are born in one country and move to another during their lifetime. Even when voluntary, immigration is often a difficult process for individuals and families. The decision to leave one's country of origin and move to another often brings dis-

connection from familiar social institutions and cultural practices, separation from family members, and isolation from sources of support in one's new homeland [Suárez-Orozco, Todorova, & Louie, 2002].

In most cases, the immigration experience is accompanied by acculturation. In the most general terms, acculturation can be defined as 'the process of cultural change and adaptation that occurs when individuals from different cultures come into contact' [Gibson, 2001, p. 19]. When specifically applied to the context of international migration, acculturation refers to the process of adaptation along two dimensions: (a) adoption of ideals, values, and behaviors of the receiving culture, and (b) retention of ideals, values, and beliefs from the immigrant¹ person's culture of origin [Phinney, Horenzyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001]. As will be discussed in detail throughout this article, these acculturation dimensions are closely related to social and cultural identity [Bhatia & Ram, 2001]. Of course, immigrant people bring about cultural change and adaptation in the receiving culture as well, but we leave examinations of this process to sociological and anthropological scholars. The focus here is on processes that occur at the individual level for people who see their new country as their primary residence and as the place where their descendants will live.

The concept of acculturation has been used to refer both to immigrant people and to nonimmigrant ethnic groups [Pope-Davis, Liu, Ledesma-Jones, & Nevitt, 2000; Saxton, 2001; Suleiman, 2002]. Nonimmigrant ethnic groups are faced with acculturation challenges not because they have chosen to enter a new society, but rather because they have been involuntarily subjected to the dominance of a majority group (often on their own land). Examples of such nonimmigrant ethnic groups include African Americans and Native Americans in the United States, Palestinians in Israel, and Catholic Irish in Northern Ireland. Acculturation among groups such as these is quite different from acculturation among voluntary immigrant people or refugees because their status as 'minorities' or 'ethnic groups' within the receiving culture is involuntary. As such, acculturation among members of nonimmigrant ethnic groups involves issues that are beyond the scope of the present analysis [Markus, Steele, & Steele, 2000].

In addition to acculturation, identity is also often an important issue for immigrant people [e.g., Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Phinney, 2003]. The purpose of the present article is to explore the relationship between acculturation and identity. We argue that (a) social and cultural identity underlie acculturation and (b) personal identity can help to 'anchor' the immigrant person during cultural transition and adaptation. In formulating our argument, we employ theories of identity advanced by Erikson [1950], Tajfel and Turner [1986], and others. Our goal in explicating the acculturation-identity relationship is to adopt and pursue a specific theoretical position, namely that it is possible to define acculturation and identity in terms precise enough to support specific theoretical propositions, calls for empirical research, and rationales for interventions to promote identity development in acculturating individuals. Accordingly, an important element of this paper is the call for empirical research

¹ The term 'immigrant' is used here to refer both to first-generation (born outside the host country) and second-generation (born in the host country but raised by foreign-born parents) individuals.

and intervention efforts based on the literature review and arguments put forth here. Although we acknowledge that theoretical efforts are important in their own right [Brubaker & Cooper, 2000], we also view theory as a tool to be used for the betterment of individuals and of society. From a pragmatic perspective, theory supports the formulation of research questions and hypotheses for empirical studies [Kurtines & Silverman, 1999]; in turn, both theory and empirical evidence suggest important targets and mechanisms for fostering positive change [Schwartz, Kurtines, & Montgomery, 2005].

Although identity is an important issue from adolescence on [Kroger, 2000], we focus here primarily on adolescents and emerging adults (i.e., individuals between the ages of 13 and 25) for two reasons. First, identity issues are most salient to adolescents and emerging adults [Arnett, 2000; Erikson, 1968]. Second, although acculturation and the stressors associated with it can have negative consequences for immigrant people of all ages [e.g., Hovey, 2000], immigrant adolescents and young adults are faced with the challenge of creating a cultural identity that incorporates elements of both the heritage and receiving cultures, in addition to confronting the normative personal identity issues that characterize this developmental period [Arnett, 1999; Schwartz, 2005]. As a result, the 'side effects' of acculturation and associated identity distress may be most severe for adolescents and young adults. However, a successfully developing identity may buffer against these negative effects, particularly in this age group.

Metatheoretical Underpinnings of Constructs Used in the Present Analysis

The terms *acculturation*, *identity*, and *culture*, all of which are central to the argument advanced in the present paper, have been the subject of much debate. These terms are, by definition, abstractions and attempts to derive generalized and broad understandings of nuanced processes. At one extreme are 'modernist' viewpoints stating that these constructs are fixed entities that similarly describe or affect all individuals, groups, and nations, whereas at the other extreme are 'postmodernist' viewpoints stating that all human experience is variable, malleable, local and particular, difficult to define in any general terms, and in constant flux. Many postmodernist critiques [e.g., Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Gergen, 1991; Hunt, Schneider, & Comer, 2004; Rudmin, 2003] have taken modernist conceptions of acculturation, identity, and culture to task, arguing against the use of these normative conceptions and the operational definitions and causal explanations that are drawn from them.

To illustrate, we provide examples of postmodernist critiques of the concepts of acculturation, identity, and culture. Regarding *acculturation*, Hunt et al. [2004] argue that the notion that individuals acculturate implies movement 'from' traditional values and beliefs and 'toward' Western values and beliefs, representing a value judgment against non-Western cultures. Regarding *identity*, Brubaker and Cooper [2000] suggest that identity does not exist, but is rather a 'catch-all' term used to represent almost anything pertaining to the self. Gergen [1991] acknowledges the existence of identity but claims that it is constantly in flux and cannot be isolated as a permanent construction. Regarding *culture*, Bhatia and Ram [2001] argue that culture is difficult to define, given that it is not clear (a) what constitutes

a 'culture' and (b) where one culture ends and another begins. Gjerde [2004] goes even further, arguing that the very notion of culture as a fixed entity that characterizes groups of people is errant and promotes stereotyping (i.e., believing that people from a given 'culture' are largely the same). Criticisms such as these imply that pursuing conceptual clarity and operational definitions of these terms may be misleading.

We respect the views of these scholars and do not dispute the contention that fixed and simplistic definitions of terms such as acculturation, identity, and culture underestimate and underrepresent the constructs to which they refer. However, a primary criticism of the postmodernist movement is that it identifies problems without offering viable solutions [e.g., Chandler, 1995]. Postmodern approaches contend that phenomena specified by modernist theories are in constant flux (and therefore may not be locatable), take different forms for each person or group (and therefore may not be generalizable), or do not exist at all. If one's goal is to 'do useful theoretical work' [Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, p. 11], then postmodern conceptions of acculturation, identity, and culture may suffice. However, if one aims to operationally define these concepts for empirical work and application, postmodern conceptions do not suffice. As Brubaker and Cooper [2000] note, a view of identity as constantly in flux and impossible to locate does not offer pragmatic theoretical, empirical, or applied utility.

We agree with Shore [2002] and others who contend that it is not necessary to throw out the baby (psychological constructs) with the bathwater (positivistic universalism). Instead, we self-consciously adopt 'modernist' conceptions of acculturation, identity, culture, and related constructs for pragmatic purposes. In doing so, we acknowledge that we are using definitions that do not capture the full essence of the constructs to which they refer. However, to use a statistical analogy, we believe it is better to develop a model that explains a small amount of variability than not to develop a model at all. In deriving operational definitions for empirical research and subsequent applied efforts, the specified models appear more 'fixed' or 'normative' than one might prefer. However, as Schachter [2005] has argued, an operationally defined and clearly specified conception of identity that is also flexible enough to be applied across different social and cultural contexts may represent a middle ground between the modernist and postmodernist perspectives.

Further, we use integrative definitions of terms wherever possible. For example, the term 'identity' has a number of meanings. Even within modernist approaches, there are a number of approaches to identity (e.g., personal and social), and within a given approach, multiple aspects of identity may be identified (e.g., sexual and vocational personal identities; ethnic and class-based social identities). As specified below, our definition of identity includes both personal and social components. With regard to acculturation, we follow the advice of Rudmin [2003] and do not operationalize acculturation in terms of four mutually exclusive strategies. Rather, we operationalize acculturation according to two key (and independent) dimensions identified in the literature [Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001]: adoption of receiving culture ideals and practices, and retention of heritage culture ideals and practices. Our definition of culture is borrowed from Triandis [2001, p. 908]: 'what "has worked" in the experience of a society that was worth transmitting to future generations, ... idea[s] [that are] adopted by more and more people, ... *shared* standard operating procedures, unstated assumptions,

tools, norms, values, ... [and] conventions about what to pay attention to and how much to weigh the elements that are sampled.' This definition of culture is echoed by cultural anthropologists such as Shore [2002], who argues that culture represents ways of thinking that are internalized from the social institutions operating within a given country or region. As such, we contend that, within each country or region, the dominant group determines what the 'culture' is. For example, not all people residing within the United States endorse competition and an 'everyone for themselves' mentality. However, because the dominant group (i.e., white American men) tends to endorse these values, they have come to be synonymous with American culture. Such a conception of culture is consistent with Bronfenbrenner's [1979] notion of the 'macrosystemic' context as the values and ideals that characterize a particular group, nation, or region at a particular point in history.

Conceptions of Identity

Before advancing our ideas about the relationship between acculturation and identity, we will first seek to articulate our views about what identity is, and the purposes it serves for the individual, by drawing on and extending current literature. Once organized and synthesized, existing theoretical guidance can be used to formulate and test new theoretical propositions and to design and evaluate efforts to help immigrant people develop an identity that anchors them during the process of adapting to their new homelands.

As noted above, the term 'identity' has been used in a number of ways and to refer to a number of concepts [Brubaker & Cooper, 2000]. Conceptions of identity range from (a) developmental arguments that identity is a normative process and a necessary prerequisite to being able to make one's way in the world [e.g., Erikson, 1950, 1968] to (b) postmodern arguments that the concept of identity means almost nothing at all, because the essence of who one is is constantly in flux and cannot be defined as anything in particular [e.g., Gergen, 1991]. However, given his careful attention to the multidimensionality of identity and to its embeddedness within cultural contexts, we find the work of Erikson [1950] useful for the present theoretical analysis. Erikson conceptualized identity as resulting from a dynamic interplay between individual and context. He assumed that this interplay was a universal phenomenon, but he also argued that the 'historical actuality' of the wider cultural context sets parameters on what individuals can count on during the process of identity development [Erikson, 1968]. We find this integrative conceptualization useful for considering the relationship between acculturation and identity, but we also seek to go beyond Erikson's thinking in order to contextualize and organize extant theoretical notions and to further new theoretical propositions.

Erikson [1968] conceptualized identity development as a central task of adolescence that (a) optimally results in a coherent and self-constructed dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and personal history and (b) functionally guides the unfolding of the adult life course. Consistent with Erikson [1950], we regard identity as the organization of self-understandings that define one's 'place in the world' [for extended discussions, see Schwartz, 2001; Schwartz, Côté, & Arnett, in press].

Where Erikson distinguished between personal and social² aspects of identity, we find it useful to also attend to cultural aspects of identity [Jensen, 2003; Phinney et al., 2001], which are drawn from parts of one's social identity [Brown, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1986]. In other words, our view is that identity is a synthesis of personal, social, and cultural self-conceptions [Schwartz, 2001]. Personal identity refers to the *goals, values, and beliefs* that an individual adopts and holds. Social identity refers both to (a) the group with which one identifies, including its self-identified ideals, mores, labels, and conventions [Erikson, 1968] and (b) the extent to which this identification leads one to favor the 'ingroup' (i.e., the group to which one perceives oneself as belonging) and to distance oneself from 'outgroups' (i.e., groups other than the ingroup) [Tajfel & Turner, 1986]. Cultural identity is a special case of social identity [Padilla & Perez, 2003; Phinney et al., 2001] and is defined as the interface between the person and the cultural context [Bhatia & Ram, 2001]. Cultural identity refers to a sense of solidarity with the ideals of a given cultural group and to the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors manifested toward one's own (and other) cultural groups as a result of this solidarity [Jensen, 2003; Roberts, Phinney, Masse, Chen, Roberts, & Romero, 1999].

What are the functions of identity? Building upon Erikson's ideas on this question, Adams and Marshall [1996] maintain that identity functions as a self-regulatory social-psychological structure, in that it directs attention, processes information, manages impressions, and selects behaviors. Individuals adopt identities through processes characterized (a) by imitation and identification or (b) by exploration, construction, and experience [Serafini & Adams, 2002]. Collectivist cultural values are more consonant with identity formation through imitation and identification, whereas individualistic cultural values are more consonant with exploration and construction. In either case, identity, according to Adams and Marshall [1996], functions to provide '(a) the structure for understanding who one is; (b) meaning and direction through commitments, values, and goals, (c) a sense of personal control, (d) consistency, coherence, and harmony between values, beliefs and commitments, and (e) the ability to recognize potential in future possibilities and choices' (p. 433). These notions about the functions of identity suggest mechanisms by which identity guides the life course that may be particularly pertinent for immigrant people. The changes (or lack thereof) in ideals, values, and behaviors that occur during acculturation have clear implications for how immigrant people form, revise, and maintain their identity, either through imitation and identification or through exploration and construction. As an immigrant person is exposed to receiving culture ideals and interacts with the new social environment, his or her identity will likely change. Although Erikson considered identity development and revision to be a fundamental and normative task of adolescence and adulthood [Erikson, 1950, 1968], it may be especially salient for immigrant people seeking to locate themselves within their receiving and heritage cultures and to maintain a sense of self-consistency while considering new possibilities.

² Erikson included ego identity as a third aspect of identity, but he implied that ego identity is largely unconscious and therefore may not be accessible or measurable [for an extended discussion, see Schwartz, 2005].

One thesis that we advance in this paper is that acculturation represents changes in one's cultural identity. Although cultural identity may be conceptually similar to ethnic identity, cultural identity is broader and more encompassing [Jensen, 2003; Phinney et al., 2001]. Whereas ethnic identity has been defined as the subjective meaning of one's ethnicity and the feelings that one maintains toward one's ethnic group [Phinney, 1992; Roberts et al., 1999], cultural identity refers to specific values, ideals, and beliefs (e.g., individualism, collectivism, familism, filial piety) adopted from a given cultural group, as well as one's feelings about belonging to that group [Jensen, 2003]. Indeed, the changes attributed to acculturation, such as changes in linguistic preferences and in core beliefs about the relative importance of the individual versus that of the group, may refer in actuality to changes in one's cultural identity. For example, as an immigrant person acculturates, her or his definition of the 'ingroup' might expand to include those in the new receiving society as well as those from the heritage society; consequently, individuals in the new receiving society may no longer be considered part of the 'outgroup.' Orientations toward individualism and collectivism, which we also consider under the rubric of cultural identity [Triandis, 2001], may also change as immigrant people acculturate. Selected goals, values, and beliefs drawn from the receiving culture may then be integrated into one's personal identity. Such a conceptualization may help to address the contention of Hunt et al. [2004] that 'acculturation' has never been properly operationally defined.

Accordingly, our definition of an adaptive 'identity' includes two components: (a) a coherent *personal* identity, signifying a set of goals, values, and beliefs that are internally consistent with one another and that are employed and manifested similarly across situations [Erikson, 1950; Schwartz, 2001], and (b) a coherent *social* identity (including *cultural* identity) that is internally consistent, flexible enough to support changes that occur as a result of acculturation without losing its internal consistency and workability, and that generates positive feelings about the group(s) to which one perceives oneself as belonging [Brown, 2000].

Before going further in articulating what an *adaptive* identity might be, it may be best to make explicit certain assumptions we hold about identity. Our first assumption is that, when quantified, identity refers to the amount of coherence and internal consistency (personal identity) that one manifests, group identification and pro-ingroup attitudes (social identity) that one endorses, and identification with the ideals, values, and practices of one's cultural ingroup(s) (cultural identity). 'Greater' amounts of personal identity therefore refer to more solid but flexible commitments [Bosma & Kunnen, 2001]; 'greater' amounts of social identity, at least in reference to acculturation, refer to higher levels of solidarity with and favoritism toward one's ingroup(s), and 'greater' amounts of cultural identity refer to higher degrees of identification with and allegiance toward a particular cultural ingroup or set of ingroups.

Numerous studies, albeit with Western samples, have shown that a coherent personal identity is associated with more favorable psychosocial outcomes than is a less coherent personal identity [for recent reviews, see Bosma & Kunnen, 2001; Schwartz, 2001]. In Western countries, active identity exploration and construction are associated with greater identity coherence and adaptive outcomes, although admittedly 'adaptive outcomes' such as greater personal locus of control, goal-directedness, self-motivation, and nonconformity to peer pressure reflect an individual-

istic and Western cultural perspective [Serafini & Adams, 2002]. Nevertheless, a more coherent (and actively constructed) personal identity may help to prevent or alleviate distress and other problematic outcomes, particularly for young people in individualistic Western cultural contexts. On the other hand, Erikson [1950] maintains that some degree of identity confusion (i.e., what one does not know, or has yet to discover or create, about oneself) is adaptive, in part because a person with 'too much' certainty about her or his identity may be overly closed-minded and rigid. Indeed, identity theorists [e.g., Bosma & Kunnen, 2001; Stephen, Fraser, & Marcia, 1992] explicitly contend that an adaptive identity is continually revised over the lifespan and therefore cannot be 'complete' in adolescence or emerging adulthood.

The implications of having 'more' or 'less' social and cultural identity appear to differ from the implications of having 'more' or 'less' personal identity. For Erikson [1980, p. 109], social identity refers primarily to 'inner solidarity with a group's ideals.' Within the social identity theory, the amount of identification and solidarity one feels with a particular ingroup may be prognostic of (a) favoritism toward that ingroup and (b) disfavor toward certain outgroups, particularly those whose interests conflict with those of the ingroup or who the person believes would want to harm the ingroup [Brown, 2000]. The relationship of 'more' social and cultural identity to acculturation depends on who the ingroup and outgroups are. If an immigrant person identifies with a socially devalued ingroup, such as nonwhite immigrant groups in Western countries, the experience of acculturation may be more difficult than for someone who identifies heavily with a socially valued ingroup (see Bhatia & Ram [2001], who argue that the experiences of European and non-European immigrants in the United States are qualitatively different – largely for this reason). Further, high levels of social identity in receiving society individuals are often associated with prejudice and discrimination against immigrant and minority individuals, as individuals highly oriented toward the receiving society may expect immigrant people to 'leave their cultural baggage at the door' [Piontkowski, Florack, Hoelker, & Obdrzálek, 2000; Zagefka & Brown, 2002]. So the extent to which 'more' social identity is better depends on the ingroups and outgroups in question, and as Erikson [1950, 1968] speculated with regard to identity in general, 'more is better' only up to a certain point.

Beyond Erikson: A Broader Understanding of Social Identity in Relation to Acculturation

Our use of the term *social identity* may require some explanation and clarification. Both Erikson [1968] and Tajfel and Turner [1986] have used this term to refer to the ways in which individuals identify with the groups to which they belong – as well as the psychosocial consequences of these identifications. Although the two theories differ regarding the ways in which identification with groups is achieved, it may be possible to utilize aspects from the two perspectives together in the service of relating acculturation to social identity [for an example of such an effort, see Phinney, 1992, 2003].

Erikson's theory of identity may be helpful in understanding the acculturation process and its links to identity in some ways but not others. Erikson [1950, 1968]

focused on the interface between person and context, and neo-Eriksonian theories of identity have further specified that both personal and social identity develop through negotiation between the person and members of the social context [Adams & Marshall, 1996; Côté, 1996; Schwartz, 2001]. Although Erikson did not specifically discuss acculturation or cultural identity in these terms, he was greatly interested in the rapidity of sociocultural change that characterized the last century and in the personal disorientation that seemed to accompany such change. In terms of social identity, he was primarily interested in how individuals and groups keep their preferred views intact and resist information that might lead them to accept competing views [Hoare, 2002]. Erikson illustrated his ideas on this topic by describing a 'pseudospecies mentality.' He believed that, in times of tremendous change, people cling to ideas, preferences, and fears that bolster a sense of their own group's uniqueness [Erikson, 1975]. When one comes into contact with individuals from other groups, whether through immigration or through the effects of globalization, the need arises to identify with the ideals of one's ingroup in order to be 'something in particular' at the group level. For example, Portes & Rumbaut [2001] found that many Hispanic immigrant adolescents did not even 'know' that they were Hispanic until they entered the United States and were confronted with (a) a group label applied to them as Spanish speakers, (b) the reality that many of their peers in their new homeland were 'not Hispanic,' and (c) experiences of discrimination against Hispanic individuals. As a result, these adolescents perceived a need to define and understand what it means to be 'Hispanic,' both as a group label and as an identification for themselves – a social identity that would guide their acculturation process.

Broadly, then, Erikson focuses on negotiation between person and context (and on the resulting consolidation of identity within the person) as the primary vehicle by which identity is formed. Such a model may be helpful in explaining the development of personal identity and how it relates to acculturation, but we do not find it sufficient to explain the development of social and cultural identity and how these aspects of identity are related to acculturation. Although Erikson [1975] speculated broadly on causes and effects of 'pseudospeciation,' it remained for social identity theorists working in the late 20th and early 21st centuries [for a comprehensive review, see Brown, 2000] to elaborate and test propositions about ingroup favoritism and denigration of foreigners by receiving society individuals [Mummendey, Klink, & Brown, 2001], immigrant people's perceptions of discrimination [Phinney, Madden, & Santos, 1998], and the degree of match between immigrant people's cultural identities and the acculturation preferences of the receiving society [Piontkowski et al., 2000; Zagefka & Brown, 2002].

Whereas Erikson's [1975] concept of 'pseudospeciation' refers largely to the individual in relation to the group, social identity theory refers largely to the group in relation to the individual. According to Tajfel and Turner [1986], social identity refers to the affective valence assigned to the ingroup and outgroup and to the behaviors occurring as a result of these identifications. For example, individuals who identify heavily with their ethnic, cultural, or national group may regard the welfare and status of the group as more important than their own [e.g., Chen, Brockner, & Katz, 1998]. Moreover, groups designated as outgroups (i.e., those to which one does not belong) may become the object of scorn, discrimination, or worse – especially if the outgroup is perceived as a threat, as subordinate to the ingroup, or both [for a review,

see Brown, 2000]. These between-group processes are particularly salient with regard to comparisons between one's national group and those considered as 'foreigners' [Mummendey et al., 2001]. For example, native-born individuals in a given receiving society may regard immigrant people as a threat, especially if they fear that immigrant values, behaviors, and traditions have the potential to overtake or reshape those of the receiving society [Barker et al., 2001].

The ways in which social and cultural identity are related to acculturation, and the ways in which these aspects of identity both guide and are shaped by the acculturation process, refer to both how identity develops (Erikson) and to the intergroup attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that tend to be manifested as a result of one's identification with a specific ingroup (social identity theory). Erikson focused on the process by which identity (both personal and social) is formed, whereas Tajfel and Turner [1986] focused on the consequences of social identity – specifically identification with and positive feelings toward the cultural ingroup. These two perspectives on social identity may be used to create a larger picture of the relationship between social identity and acculturation [Phinney, 1992; Roberts et al., 1999]. This larger picture focuses principally on cultural identity, which is the aspect of social identity that refers to the ideals and values of the cultural ingroup with which the person identifies. Given our thesis that acculturation represents changes in cultural identity, acculturation may involve exploring and committing to a potentially expanded set of cultural ideals, values, and practices (including those of the new receiving culture as well as those of the heritage culture) as well as identifying with this potentially expanded set of ideals and broadening one's perceived ingroup accordingly. Whether immigrant individuals hold onto their heritage culture beliefs more strongly, allow these beliefs to coexist with those of the receiving society, or discard heritage culture beliefs and adopt those of the receiving culture depends on a number of factors, including the degree of similarity between the two cultures [Rudmin, 2003], the extent of prejudice and discrimination that one experiences [Brown, 2000], the support for heritage culture beliefs in the new society [Portes & Rumbaut, 2001], and the degree to which the cultural identity is flexible enough to accommodate seemingly incompatible belief systems [Jensen, 2003].

Distinctions between Personal and Social Identity

Personal and social identity are conceptually separate, in that personal identity represents the individual's goals, values, and beliefs (which may or may not be specifically related to the ideals of a particular social or cultural group), whereas social identity represents those values and beliefs that are explicitly tied to a particular ingroup, as well as attitudes and behaviors toward ingroup and outgroup members based on these ideals. Social identity, and particularly cultural identity, is likely to change as a result of acculturation as immigrant people come into contact with individuals, institutions, and customs from the new receiving society. The extent of this shift is assumed to depend upon (a) the extent to which heritage culture values, beliefs, and customs are maintained and the extent to which receiving culture values, beliefs, and customs are acquired [Phinney et al., 2001], and (b) the degree of divergence between the receiving and heritage cultures [Rudmin, 2003]. As immigrant

adolescents and young adults consider incompatibilities in values, ideals, and behaviors between their receiving and heritage cultures, they may experience identity distress resulting from ‘divided loyalties’ between the two cultures [Hernandez, Montgomery, & Kurtines, in press].

Changes in social and cultural identity can have a disequilibrating effect on immigrant individuals. Personal identity, however, may play a protective role to the extent that its core remains stable. We contend that the person’s personal identity – one’s most fundamental goals, values, and beliefs and the coherence among these ideals – has the potential to stabilize the individual during the transition to a new society. The presence of a coherent set of goals, ideals, values, and beliefs may help individuals decide how to proceed in the face of such incompatibilities, whereas lack of coherence in one’s personal identity may render one susceptible to the extremes of either the new receiving culture or one’s culture of origin. Recent qualitative research has begun to explore how immigrant individuals (e.g., girls of Moroccan descent in the Netherlands) [Ketner, Buitelaar, & Bosma, 2004] use personal identity strategies to avoid intersubjective and intrasubjective tensions in negotiating social and ethnic identity transitions. This is an important future direction for identity research [Schwartz, 2005].

To some extent, however, personal and social identity may be inextricably intertwined, particularly in cases where aspects of personal identity coincide with ideals of a particular social or cultural ingroup to which an individual belongs. Accordingly, in some cases acculturation-related confusion and distress about social identity may also bring about confusion and distress about aspects of personal identity. This may be most likely to occur when personal identity elements that the person considers or adopts conflict with ideals or practices that are specifically prescribed or proscribed by the receiving or heritage culture (and especially when prescriptions or proscriptions of the two cultures are incompatible with one another). The extent to which personal identity elements are culturally ‘charged’ depends on the immigrant group and receiving society in question [Bhatia & Ram, 2001]. For example, a young Middle Eastern immigrant woman who aspires to become a doctor and decides to attend university may encounter resistance from her traditionally oriented family, who expects her to marry and begin raising children at a young age. In contrast, a young South American immigrant woman who aspires to become a doctor and decides to attend university may not encounter any culturally based resistance to her goals and plans. In cases where personal identity elements conflict with cultural prescriptions or proscriptions, personal identity coherence may be undermined; as a result, a stable personal identity may not be available to support the process of cultural identity change. It is in these situations that interventions to promote and stabilize a coherent personal identity (within the constraints established by the heritage and receiving cultures), while clarifying and making explicit the person’s social identity, may be most helpful. We will return to the issue of intervention later.

The Relationship between Acculturation and Identity: Key Theoretical Issues

Variations in Acculturation by Ethnic Group and Culture of Origin

It is important to acknowledge that the acculturation process does not take the same form for all immigrant groups and receiving societies [Bhatia & Ram, 2001]. In Western societies, acculturation may be a more difficult and distress-inducing process for nonwhite, non-Western, non-European immigrant people because of greater cultural and phenotypic differences between immigrant people and members of the receiving society's dominant cultural group. These heightened phenotypic and cultural differences may make it more likely that nonwhite immigrant people will be branded as 'foreigners' and will be discriminated against [Mummendey et al., 2001; Simon & Lynch, 1999]. The experiences of nonwhite immigrant people are especially important to consider in light of changes in immigration laws in developed nations such as the United States, Canada, Western Europe, and Australia that have increased the number and representation of nonwhite immigrant people coming from developing countries in regions such as Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and South and Southeast Asia [McKay & Wong, 2000; Richmond, 2002]. Two important trends have occurred as a result of this shift in the 'sources' of immigration. First, whereas the majority of 'receiving' countries are predominantly individualistic and developed, the majority of 'sending' countries are predominantly collectivistic and developing [Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault, & Senécal, 1997]. Second, in most countries that receive immigrant people, individuals of European descent represent the majority group, whereas the bulk of immigrant people coming into these countries are nonwhite. As a result, many immigrant people and their descendants continue to 'stand out' as minorities – both visually and culturally [e.g., Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001] – even after mastering the language of their new homeland and adopting aspects of its culture. Not surprisingly, public opinion surveys reveal that, across a number of immigrant-receiving countries, nonwhite immigrant people are viewed as inferior to and less desirable than white immigrant people [Simon & Lynch, 1999]; and many native-born Americans [Cornelius, 2002] and Europeans [Licata & Klein, 2002] oppose immigration by individuals whom they perceive as racially, culturally, or religiously different.

Issues of prejudice and institutional barriers are therefore more likely to affect the lives of nonwhite immigrant people and their descendants [Licata & Klein, 2002; Simon & Lynch, 1999]. As a result, a purely psychological approach to acculturation, where individuals' acculturation is studied outside of its context, may 'penalize' certain individuals and groups for acculturating differently than others [Rudmin, 2003]. For example, Berry [1997] and others have argued that biculturalism, in which the immigrant person both adopts the ideals, values, and practices of the receiving culture and retains the ideals, values, and practices of the heritage culture, is the most adaptive acculturation strategy. In cases where the two cultures are similar, a bicultural approach may not be overly difficult, but in cases where the cultures are quite different (e.g., when the heritage culture is primarily collectivistic and the receiving culture is primarily individualistic), biculturalism may be not only difficult but distressing [Rudmin, 2003]. For example, consider the case of a young Chinese immigrant woman in the United States. The prevailing cultural context in

the United States is one where individuals are responsible principally for themselves, whereas in China, individuals are expected to sacrifice personal goals and well-being for that of their families, particularly aging parents [Yeh & Bedford, 2003]. In this case, a bicultural approach would be challenging, contradictory, and potentially stressful.

So what exactly is the role of identity in acculturation, and vice versa? The relationship of acculturation to identity has been alluded to in a number of works [e.g., Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Phinney, 2003], although this relationship has not been explicitly spelled out. In our view, acculturation is inextricably intertwined with identity, in that changes that occur as a result of acculturation may be viewed as changes in cultural identity. Because we advance a definition of identity that incorporates personal, social, and cultural components, we may be in a position to speculate on the mechanisms by which acculturation affects these three aspects of identity.

Changes in Identity and Their Relationship to Acculturation

To understand how acculturation affects identity and vice versa, it is first important to understand how identity develops and changes. Identity development is a collaborative project between the individual and her or his social [Adams & Marshall, 1996; Côté, 1996] and cultural [Baumeister & Muraven, 1996] context. Changes in identity occur when one and/or one's context change in ways that do not mesh with one's current configuration of goals, values, and beliefs [Bosma & Kunnen, 2001]. Individuals generally respond to these 'identity challenges' in one of three ways: (a) confronting the challenge and purposefully revising one's identity in response to it; (b) relying on external norms and support sources and responding in ways that are perceived as socially appropriate; or (c) avoiding or ignoring the challenge and making decisions and changes only in response to specific situational demands [Berzonsky, 1990]. Although postmodernist writers [e.g., Gergen, 1991] have argued that a situation-by-situation approach is the most realistic way to conceptualize identity, a number of studies have found that individuals who employ such an approach tend to report poor psychosocial adjustment [for reviews, see Berzonsky, 1990; Schwartz, 2001].

Changes made (or not made) in one's identity in response to intrapersonal or contextual challenges are manifested in the quality and stability of the commitments that one maintains [Schwartz et al., in press]. In Western cultural contexts, identity commitments are adaptive to the extent that they represent a meshing of both personally chosen and socially dictated or ascribed elements [Adams & Marshall, 1996]. Commitments that are overly self-focused, with too little social consideration, may not be responsive to contextual changes; conversely, commitments that are overly dictated by the social environment, with too little agentic input from the individual, may also be too rigid or unstable. In this way, the stability and flexibility of one's commitments can be taken as a valid measure of identity coherence [Bosma & Kunnen, 2001], with commitment to a set of goals, values, and beliefs representing the primary difference between a coherent and confused identity. Although these principles regarding identity change were developed with regard to personal identity, they may apply to social and cultural identity as well.

Theoretical Propositions regarding the Acculturation-Identity Relationship

If one accepts the premise that the process of acculturation manifests itself as changes in cultural identity, then the principles by which identity changes may be used to generate testable theoretical propositions about the acculturation-identity relationship. First, given that identity develops through changes in the individual and her or his social environment, it may be fair to state that exposure to the receiving-culture context is what initially prompts changes in the immigrant person's cultural identity. Berzonsky's [1990] identity decision making perspective suggests considerable individual differences in the ways in which these changes occur, with some immigrant people taking an active position with respect to their acculturation, others relying on heritage or receiving culture individuals or institutions for guidance on how to handle acculturation, and still others enacting cultural identity changes on a situation-by-situation basis with little consistency. Note that such a perspective focuses on the *process* by which identity (in this case cultural identity) is developed or modified, rather than on the specific *content* of that identity. Any of the three decision-making styles described here can be used to adopt (or resist) receiving culture ideals and practices and to retain (or resist) heritage culture practices.

A second principle, however, is that the importance of the specific *content* of the identity being developed or modified varies between personal and social/cultural identity. Most personal identity scholars have emphasized presumably universal processes by which personal identity is formed and maintained, with the assumption that the specific contents of the identities formed are idiosyncratic (and interesting, but less informative for development of generalizable knowledge) [for reviews, see Bosma & Kunnen, 2001; Schwartz, 2001]. With regard to social and cultural identity, however, both process and content are important. The specific ingroup (cultural or otherwise) with whom one identifies often defines who the outgroups are and how they will be regarded [Mummendey et al., 2001]. With specific reference to acculturation, the cultural identity with which one enters the receiving society, as well as the way in which that cultural identity is modified (or not modified) following immigration, may be a determining factor in how the immigrant person is regarded both by receiving and heritage culture individuals. For example, a person who chooses to identify with a diaspora, religious community, or ethnic enclave and not to adopt the ideals and practices of the receiving culture may meet resistance and discrimination from receiving society individuals who expect that newcomers will assimilate into the receiving society [Piontkowski et al., 2000; Zagefka & Brown, 2002]. Similarly, to the extent that a heritage culture diaspora or ethnic enclave exists within the receiving society, individuals who accept and adopt aspects of the receiving culture may be criticized and ostracized by more 'traditionalist' members of the heritage culture, diaspora, ethnic enclave, or religious community. Either outcome may result in a fear-based 'territoriality of identity' that is transmitted across generations [Erikson, 1975].

Our third principle, then, is that the viability and benefits of biculturalism vary according to the heritage and receiving cultures in question. Any consideration of acculturation in immigrant people must acknowledge the differential presence of barriers to identity development, adjustment, and 'getting ahead' faced by immigrant people from different sending countries and ethnic backgrounds [Bhatia & Ram, 2001]. Moreover, bicultural immigrant people, especially those from visible minority

groups and from collectivist-oriented heritage cultures, may be ostracized both by receiving society individuals (i.e., as ‘foreigners’) and by heritage culture individuals (i.e., as having ‘sold out’). Although bicultural individuals are able to access and display the cultural orientations of either their receiving or heritage culture, depending on the demands of a given situation [Hong, Benet-Martínez, Chiu, & Morris, 2003], biculturalism often implies uneasy compromises between the receiving and heritage cultures [Rudmin, 2003]. Rudmin and Ahmadzadeh [2001] contend that, even when the heritage culture’s ideals and values are mixed with those of the receiving culture, the heritage culture as a coherent entity is lost. Even if a bicultural approach is the most workable alternative in that it minimizes both ostracism from the receiving society and criticism from heritage culture individuals, biculturalism is clearly not the panacea that some acculturation theorists have portrayed it to be.

In bicultural individuals, the contrasting expectations of receiving and heritage culture individuals create a ‘tug of war’ that can create considerable distress, even as the bicultural person appears to function well both in the receiving culture and within her or his diaspora or ethnic enclave [Hernandez et al., in press]. For example, in a study of cultural identity and perceptions of American culture in immigrant students, Schwartz, Zamboanga, Rodriguez, and Wang [2005] found that some participants reported discrimination from both receiving culture individuals and members of their heritage culture or ethnic enclave. A Colombian participant stated that ‘I have been called a spic [in the United States]’ and that ‘some family members [who] live in my country call me American, which I don’t like ... so I do feel discriminated [against].’ A somewhat similar issue often arises for immigrant adolescents and emerging adults whose families come from multiple heritage cultures. Such individuals may experience difficulty or distress in identifying exactly ‘what they are’ in terms of who the in-group is [Mann, 2004].

A different problem may emerge for individuals who adopt the values and ideals of the receiving culture and do not retain those of the heritage culture. Some research indicates that young people who adopt this strategy are at heightened risk for self-destructive behaviors such as substance use [Gil, Wagner, & Vega, 2000] and sexual risk taking [Ford & Norris, 1993]. This ‘assimilation’ process may be especially problematic for individuals who reside in diasporic contexts or in ethnic enclaves, where allegiance to heritage culture values and practices is widespread and expected. The individual may receive little support from the heritage culture community and, especially in the case of nonwhite immigrant people, may still be regarded as a ‘foreigner’ by receiving society individuals [Rosenbloom & Way, 2004].

A fourth principle is that identity is a particularly important issue in the clash between growing Western influences and militant adherence to traditional religious and moral principles in regions such as the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia [Huntington, 1996]. Because of changing global economic conditions, a sizeable proportion of the world’s immigrant people come from these regions. Given the cultural clash between traditional and Western values and practices, it is important to attend not only to these regions but also to immigrant people from these regions who have settled in Western nations. Some extremist groups formed in these regions have adopted the position that Western values and practices represent a threat to their way of life, and that destroying Western influences is the key to preserving their way of life [Barber, 1996]. As Huntington [1996] and others have argued, the clash be-

tween traditional and Western ways of life may be based fundamentally on identity. For example, Middle Eastern, North African, and South Asian people who have immigrated to places such as Western Europe, Canada, the United States, or Australia must decide not only how much to acculturate to their new receiving societies, but also the extent to which such acculturation may compromise their basic beliefs and values. As a case in point, Saroglou and Galand [2004] found that Muslim young adults who had immigrated to Belgium ‘seemed to be in a complex and ambiguous position’ in integrating identities, values, and religion and tended to have more ‘problematic identity statuses’ (p. 130) relative to native Belgians or youth from other immigrant groups. In these and similar cases, the issue of whether (and how much) to modify one’s cultural identity during the acculturation process may produce distress – or at least ambivalence – not only because of the threat of disapproval from receiving or heritage culture individuals, but because the very idea of accepting Western ideals may be seen as sinful and as a betrayal of the traditional religious faith.

Unexplored Areas of Association between Acculturation and Identity

Thus far, we have outlined extant knowledge and articulated specific theoretical propositions regarding the acculturation-identity relationship. At this point, we wish to highlight two broad areas in which further theoretical, empirical, and intervention work is needed. Although we advance specific theoretical propositions, these ideas need to be tested empirically before they can be used to guide applied work. The areas discussed here are barriers to the formation of personal identity and individualism and collectivism as dimensions of social/cultural identity.

Personal Identity: Immigration- and Acculturation-Related Barriers to Identity Development

In this subsection, we consider immigration- and acculturation-related barriers to personal identity development, an area that has received scant attention. As Yoder [2000, p. 99] states, barriers are most relevant to ‘adolescents and young adults who come from communities of disempowerment where they and their families are unable to influence the social institutions which affect their lives.’ This description applies to many immigrant individuals in developed societies, particularly those from ethnic or racial minority groups. However, empirical research is needed to determine which demographic, cultural, or societal characteristics actually serve as barriers to identity development. A possible way to begin such a line of research is to conduct cross-sectional studies with samples diverse in gender, ethnicity, immigrant status, country of familial origin, and socioeconomic status. Demographic, cultural, and societal characteristics that are consistently associated with a less coherent or mature personal identity might then be taken as barriers. Longitudinal studies might be used to further explore how barriers affect the formation of personal identity for immigrant individuals. Intervention programs can then be designed or modified based on the findings of these studies.

In the absence of empirical research identifying specific barriers to personal identity development, we draw on relevant theoretical literature and highlight four specific types of barriers that are discussed here: (a) socioeconomic disadvantage [Phillips & Pittman, 2003], (b) differences in cultural orientation between immigrant people and the receiving society [Côté, 1993], (c) lack of social-institutional support for identity development [Côté, 2000], and (d) ethnicity-related barriers [Schwartz, 2005]. These four barrier types all involve limiting or constriction of the array of potential personal identity options and commitments available to the person.

Socioeconomic Disadvantage. It is well known that immigrant people are more likely to occupy lower socioeconomic brackets, and to live in more impoverished conditions, than are nonimmigrant people [e.g., Beiser, Hou, Hyman, & Tousignant, 2002]. Moreover, immigrant people of color and those less acculturated to the receiving society may be more likely to be segregated from members of the receiving society [Musterd & Deurloo, 2002]. With respect to identity development, marginalization and socioeconomic disadvantage may be associated with a decrease in the number of prospective personal identity options available to young people [Phillips & Pittman, 2003; Yoder, 2000]. When the array of available personal identity alternatives is constrained, the likelihood is increased that an individual may not have access to a set of identity elements that he or she would like to select. Individuals may then have to select from a less desirable set of alternatives. Oyserman and Markus [1990], for example, found that a close match between an adolescent's expected possible selves (i.e., who he or she expected to become within the next year) and that adolescent's feared possible selves (i.e., who he or she was afraid of becoming within the next year) was associated with crime and delinquency. This finding might be taken to suggest that the constraining of potential personal identity alternatives as a result of social, cultural, and economic barriers might be associated with negative behavioral outcomes. Such a conclusion might help to explain the association found between immigration and crime [Vazsonyi & Killias, 2001]. A 'negative' personal identity, comprised of elements that the individual would rather not have selected, might not only fail to protect or anchor the immigrant person during the process of cultural identity change, but it might actually compound and increase the stress and distress associated with the process.

Differences in Cultural Orientation between Immigrant People and the Receiving Society. Immigrant people who adopt the values and beliefs of the receiving society may have access to a greater array of potential personal identity elements than may those immigrant people who do not adopt receiving culture values and beliefs. It has been argued that formal and informal social institutions within a given society or culture offer the most support to individuals who hold the ideals that characterize the larger society [Côté, 1993]. For example, in the United States, individuals who value competition and believe that success comes as a reward for tireless work may be most likely to be hired for prestigious jobs, elected to political office, and earn high salaries. In contrast, individuals who hold different ideals, such as immigrant people from collectivist cultural backgrounds, may receive little or no support from social institutions in the new receiving society unless they adopt a bicultural identity (which comes with its own challenges, as outlined above). Lack of social-institutional support may render the task of forming a personal identity more difficult and

arduous for individuals whose social or cultural identities are at variance with those of the society as a whole [Côté, 2000]. However, although these propositions make sense theoretically, they have yet to be tested empirically. If empirical support is obtained for these propositions, it may be important to (a) design interventions to help immigrant people to adopt a bicultural identity, when adaptive, and (b) create specific social institutions to assist immigrant people in understanding the receiving society's 'ways of operating.' Both of these objectives, as outlined above, may be especially helpful in countries that receive large numbers of immigrants. Language may also serve as a barrier to identity development, in that individuals who do not speak the receiving country's language may not have access to certain opportunities and life trajectories. For example, immigrant people who do not speak the receiving country's language cannot attend university or hold high-level jobs because fluency is required for understanding lectures, passing exams, and conducting nonlocal business transactions. Côté [1996] has argued that individuals use their skills, orientations, experiences, and knowledge as intangible identity assets to 'negotiate' for societal resources and for entry into important social institutions. Without knowledge of the receiving country's language, immigrant people may be limited in the extent to which they are able to acquire these intangible assets. Because language use is such an important component (and manifestation) of cultural identity [Phinney & Flores, 2002], receiving society individuals may regard immigrant people's lack of fluency in the receiving society's language as an affront and threat to the receiving culture as a whole [Barker et al., 2001] and may withhold resources from these immigrant people as a result.

Lack of Collective Support for Identity Development. Another potential barrier to identity development in immigrant and acculturating individuals may involve the ways in which the identity development process is undertaken. As Western societies have become increasingly individualistic, collective support for identity development among youth has waned [Côté & Levine, 2002]. Not coincidentally, young people have become increasingly responsible for directing their own development and for forming their own identity [Côté, 2000]. Although Erikson [1950] originally proposed that identity development would begin in the early adolescent years and would be guided by support from parents, teachers, and community institutions, increasing individualism has modified these assumptions. Presently, identity issues are more likely to be addressed in the late teens and early twenties than during adolescence [Arnett, 2000], and in most cases little external help with identity development is available [Côté, 2000]. Although Western societies vary in terms of how much support they provide for young people as they undertake the task of forming an identity [Cook & Furstenberg, 2002], there is little doubt that individualization and self-direction have become prerequisites for 'getting ahead' in these societies.

The increasing individualism in Western societies, and the resulting compulsory and often unguided process of constructing a personal identity, has important implications for the study of immigration and acculturation. Youth whose parents are familiar with the workings of the receiving society can turn to those parents for guidance. However, we argue that youth whose familiarity with the receiving culture exceeds that of their parents may be left without guidance with respect to exploring avenues for personal identity development. This may be especially true for youth

whose families have immigrated from non-Western, collectivist-oriented countries. Not only are parents from these countries unlikely to understand Western cultures and the compulsory individualization that has come to characterize Western societies, but in some cases self-direction and individualization may be proscribed in the culture of origin. In some cultures, particularly those based primarily on collectivist principles, young people are expected to assume adult roles during or immediately following adolescence [Arnett, 2000]. Immigrant youth from such cultures (and their families) may be poorly equipped to handle the task of identity development in an individualistic Western society, and therefore they may be less likely to capitalize on the opportunity for extended identity exploration and self-development afforded within such societies [Montgomery & Côté, 2003].

Ethnicity-Related Barriers. Minority status may also affect the identity elements from which young people are able to select [Yoder, 2000]. For example, individuals from visible minority groups are often discouraged from working in specific fields or from joining certain organizations. In such cases, even minority individuals who are highly acculturated to the receiving society may encounter discrimination-related barriers similar to those encountered by immigrant people unacculturated to the receiving society [Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001]. Although perceived discrimination may be linked to personal attributes such as intergroup competence and psychological distress [Phinney, Madden, & Santos, 1998], experiences of discrimination can adversely affect the personal identity that immigrant people form [Verkuyten, 2003]. Therefore, acculturation may interact with ethnicity (at least as ascribed by others) in determining the array of personal identity options available to individuals.

Social Identity: Individualism and Collectivism

In discussions of acculturation, identity, and culture, another issue that is frequently raised is individualist and collectivist self-construal. Distinctions between individualism and collectivism have been drawn in an effort to delineate overarching and systematic differences among cultural groups [e.g., Triandis, 2001; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998]. Broadly, individualism is thought to characterize Western cultures, whereas collectivism is thought to characterize non-Western cultures [Markus & Kitayama, 1991]. Individualist people are thought to view themselves as separate from others and as responsible for their own lives and behaviors. Markus and Kitayama [1991] assert that those endorsing individualism are most likely to emphasize personal aspects of their identity (e.g., beliefs, values). In contrast, collectivist people tend to be more concerned with the welfare of their families and other social contexts than with their own individual functioning, and to emphasize social aspects of their identities (e.g., group memberships) [Chen et al., 1998].

The individualist-collectivist distinction has, however, been criticized as being overstated [Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002] and failing to reflect actual differences between and among groups [Coon & Kimmelmeier, 2001]. Although Triandis' [2001] contention that North America, northwestern Europe, and Oceania represent the 'individualist' world whereas the remainder of the world is 'collectivist' seems somewhat overly simplified, there are clearly systematic differ-

ences between Western and non-Western cultures in terms of the importance of the individual versus that of the group. First, Western and non-Western cultures differ in the way that ambiguous stimuli are interpreted in terms of individual or group primacy [Hong et al., 2003]. Second, many of the basic foundations of non-Western cultures are largely collectivist in nature, whereas many of the basic foundations of Western cultures are largely individualistic in nature. For example, the cultural orientations of familism, emphasized by many Hispanic cultures [e.g., Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin, & Perez-Stable, 1987], and filial piety, emphasized by many Asian cultures [e.g., Yeh & Bedford, 2003], both emphasize prioritizing the family (e.g., respect for parents, honoring the family name, caring for elderly relatives in the home) over the individual. On the other hand, the competitive and ‘everyone for themselves’ mentality endorsed by many Westerners is not compatible with the cultural values of individuals from other parts of the world. For example, many respondents in an ongoing study examining Hispanic and Caribbean immigrant students’ perceptions of American culture [Schwartz et al., 2005] characterized American culture as ‘cold,’ ‘everyone for themselves,’ and ‘competitive.’ Although there is a great deal of variability in the ways in which individualist and collectivist ideals are expressed, and although such ‘within-individualist’ and ‘within-collectivist’ variability can dilute the magnitude of cross-cultural differences observed in individualism and collectivism [Schwartz, 1990], we contend that these cultural patterns have some utility – especially for individuals ‘in transition’ between collectivist and individualist orientations [Ben-Ari & Lavee, 2004].

Although some research has been conducted to support the distinction between primarily individualist and primarily collectivist individuals and cultures [e.g., Chen et al., 1998; de Creamer & van Dijk, 2002], some issues remain unaddressed regarding the effects of acculturation on self-construal. Given the assumption that primarily ‘individualist’ people tend to highlight personal aspects of their identity, whereas primarily ‘collectivist’ people tend to highlight social aspects of their identity [Markus & Kitayama, 1991], we note three such issues. First, as immigrant people from primarily collectivist groups acculturate to Western societies, are changes in their endorsement of individualist and collectivist values related to distinct personal attributes and characteristics of their social contexts? Second, what are the impacts on individual well-being of emphasizing (a) independence and personal identity and (b) interdependence and social identity? Third, do bicultural individuals from ‘collectivist’ backgrounds endorse independence and interdependence equally, or do they tend to prefer one orientation over the other? Moreover, do these preferences operate universally or differentially across life domains?

These three questions are likely to have related answers, so we offer some propositions regarding the three of them together. Because most immigrants to Western countries come from nations and cultural backgrounds characterized as primarily collectivist [Triandis, 2001; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998], and given our contention that acculturation signifies changes in cultural identity, we can assume that some change in cultural identity (e.g., decreased endorsement of collectivist values and increased endorsement of individualist values), as well as some degree of increased emphasis on personal identity, is likely to occur following immigration. Such changes may occur partly out of choice or a desire to ‘fit in’ with the receiving soci-

ety – especially among adolescents and emerging adults, who tend to be sensitive to peer pressure and perceived social expectations. These changes may also occur partly out of necessity; individualist-oriented Western societies often emphasize competition and the need for people to ‘market’ themselves by expressing or manifesting aspects of their personal identity (e.g., making their values known, emphasizing advanced degrees or skills) [Côté & Levine, 2002]. Following Bhatia and Ram [2001], however, the amount of acculturation-related change observed likely depends on the immigrant group and receiving society in question. Individuals from diasporic groups or religious-based cultural backgrounds may be less willing to emphasize individualism and personal identity, and may resist change either because of perceived expectations from the enclave or religious community [Alkharaji, Gardner, Martin, & Paolillo, 1997] or because of the perceived superiority of collectivist values (e.g., the familism cherished by many immigrant groups) [Markovic & Mander-son, 2002].

Research is needed to substantiate, modify, or invalidate these hypotheses. Although the focus of Bhatia and Ram [2001] on the interaction between the specifics of each immigrant group and those of the receiving society seems more consistent with the realities of acculturation than does a purely psychological approach, the extent to which changes in self-construal (as an aspect of cultural identity) occur differently across immigrant groups and receiving societies remains an empirical question. In particular, research is needed on the realities of biculturalism. Is biculturalism the most adaptive way for immigrant people to acculturate, especially if they must operate within both the receiving society and some component of the heritage culture (e.g., diaspora, ethnic enclave, religious tradition) [Berry, 1997; Hong et al., 2003; Phinney et al., 2001]? Does biculturalism remain the most adaptive acculturation option for immigrant people in cases where the cultural gap increases, where balancing the receiving and heritage cultures entails reconciling seemingly incompatible and contradictory expectations, and where the person is devalued and criticized by members of both the receiving society and the diaspora, ethnic enclave, or religious tradition [Rudmin, 2003; Rudmin & Ahmadzadeh, 2001]? Is such ‘cultural identity strain’ an inevitable reality for immigrant people – especially nonwhites – in an era where cultural differences between immigrant people and their new homelands are greater than ever before? Alternatively, might biculturalism be, for some, a transformative project where individuals see themselves as agents of cultural change, harmonizing opposites within their own personal identities [Ketner et al., 2004]? Knowledge gained by exploring these questions can be used to design interventions to support immigrant people in their transactions both within the receiving society and with members of their heritage culture.

Calls for Intervention

We call for intervention efforts both (a) to promote personal and social identity in immigrant people and (b) to render receiving societies more accessible to immigrant people. Because the field of identity intervention is in its infancy, the specific recommendations that we advance are based on identity theory, general principles from intervention research, and a handful of identity intervention evaluation stud-

ies. The interventions recommended fall into three general categories. First, interventions are recommended to alleviate cultural identity confusion in adolescents and emerging adults from ideologically based, diasporic, or enclave groups and in those with multiple heritage cultures. Second, we advocate for the creation of specific social institutions to ease newcomers' transition into the receiving society, especially with regard to language acquisition and to the informal cultural practices that govern day-to-day interpersonal transactions. Third, we argue that, for youth confronted with socioeconomic disadvantage, interventions may need to work within the constraints imposed by such disadvantage and help them to develop a positive, rather than negative, personal and social identity. Although these interventions would be made available to any immigrant person who wanted to participate, the target population would be those immigrant people experiencing difficulty or distress in the acculturation or identity development processes.

General Issues in Intervention Design

Interventions consist of two overlapping elements: (a) the format or platform in which the intervention is delivered and (b) the specific ingredients and activities included in the intervention. Generally, the format of an intervention, including the specific modality through which it is carried out, should be selected so as to be culturally syntonetic with the target population [Kumpfer, Alvarado, Smith, & Belamy, 2002]. The specific ingredients and intervention targets should be based on a solid theoretical and empirical understanding of key processes and outcomes [Kurtines & Silverman, 1999]. Interventions to promote identity development in adolescents and emerging adults are generally conducted in group participatory formats led by a trained facilitator or counselor, and many of these have been evaluated specifically with immigrant or disadvantaged samples [e.g., Ferrer-Wreder et al., 2002; Markstrom-Adams, Ascione, Braegger, & Adams, 1993; Schwartz et al., 2005]. Group processes are brought to bear on issues that participants bring to intervention sessions, with group members helping one another to address their dilemmas, goals, or problems.

Two issues related to these identity interventions remain unresolved, however. First, whereas such interventions have been shown to promote indices of personal identity (e.g., identity coherence and positive development) [Kurtines, Montgomery, Lewis Arango, & Kortsch, 2004], it is not known whether these gains in personal identity are associated with improved adjustment or with protection against or reductions in acculturation-related stress or distress. Further research may lend empirical support to one of the primary theses of the present paper – that personal identity can anchor the young immigrant person during the process of cultural identity change.

Second, it is not known whether a given intervention modality is equally appropriate across immigrant groups. To date, most identity interventions have used a group-based, participatory learning modality. Given the potential for group processes (e.g., group cohesion, mutual helpfulness among group members) to facilitate group members' progress and improvement [MacGowan, 1997], group interventions appear to have great potential for promoting identity processes in young people. However, there are at least two scenarios where group interventions may be

inappropriate. First, when interventions are delivered to individuals at risk for delinquency or other socially destructive outcomes, group approaches may inadvertently increase problem behavior [Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999]. Second, group participatory approaches where the focus is entirely on the participating person carry individualist assumptions that may conflict with the basic principles of some cultural groups. Santisteban, Muir-Malcolm, Mitrani, and Szapocznik [2002] argue that family-based interventions are most appropriate for primarily collectivist groups. In both of these cases, other methods should be explored. Although no such alternative methods have been attempted in the identity intervention literature, it is possible that family-based approaches, expressive writing exercises, or experiential methods might serve as alternatives to the group format. Moreover, given that participants tend to respond to interventions that are culturally tailored for their specific group [Kumpfer et al., 2002], an intervention format that contains key ingredients but allows for ideographic implementation for specific groups and individuals, with nuanced sensitivity to culturally syntonic identity processes (emulation vs. construction) and to culturally salient values, attitudes, and practices, will likely be most effective.

Alleviating Cultural Identity Confusion

Assuming that the views of Bhatia and Ram [2001], Rudmin [2003], and Rudmin and Ahmadzadeh [2001] accurately reflect some of the challenges and stressors facing bicultural individuals, intervention programs need not only to help immigrant adolescents and emerging adults to forge a workable bicultural identity, but also to provide support in handling pressures and criticisms both from the receiving society and from heritage culture individuals. The recommendations here may also be applicable to individuals experiencing distress concerning an existing bicultural identity or who are at risk for negative outcomes such as substance use [Gil et al., 2000] and unsafe sex [Ford & Norris, 1993] because they have chosen to reject their heritage culture. One important principle that might be stressed in these interventions is that the bicultural identity created or modified should draw on the individual's personal identity – the goals, values, and beliefs that define oneself as a person and that distinguish oneself from others. Particularly when it is self-chosen, personal identity can help to shield the individual from external pressures by specifying exactly what is within the person's 'realm of possibility' and what is not [Côté & Levine, 2002; Schwartz, 2001, 2005].

For bicultural individuals who experience distress in response to criticism from more traditional members of the heritage culture, diaspora, or ethnic enclave, a key aspect could include identifying the personal significance of, and the individual's feelings about, the receiving and heritage cultures. For example, a Colombian-American person might be helped by exercises to clarify what it means to be 'Colombian' and 'American,' as well as to solidify her thoughts and feelings about being 'Colombian and American' and as a person capable of defining, rather than being defined by, her cultural identifications. For other immigrant youth, 'reintroducing' heritage culture values and practices can be helpful. Especially when conducted in the context of the family or heritage culture community, such 'heritage culture reintroduction'

interventions may reduce the risk for substance use, sexual risk taking, and other negative behavioral outcomes [Szapocznik et al., 1986].

Intervention-based support may also have the potential to reduce stress resulting from the ‘tug of war’ between the heritage and receiving cultures, thus making a bicultural identity more workable. One such effort might include working with members of the heritage culture community (particularly when working with diasporic, enclave, or religious-based groups) to define acceptable parameters of biculturalism – in other words, which aspects of the receiving culture are acceptable to the community. For example, some religious-based cultural groups insist that girls abstain from dating until their marriages have been arranged [Ketner et al., 2004]. In working with youth from these groups, then, any bicultural identity recommended or endorsed within the intervention cannot include freedom to date whomever one chooses – even if such freedom is generally afforded to members of the receiving society. Introducing distressed young people to heritage culture community leaders, or to others from the same cultural background who have successfully created a bicultural identity in the receiving society, might be helpful. Immigrant youth could then express their dilemmas and goals both to individuals who are loyal to the heritage tradition (e.g., parents and extended family) and individuals open to some aspects of the receiving culture (e.g., similarly aged peers). Once the parameters for an acceptable bicultural identity have been identified, individuals could examine their personal identities and select aspects of the receiving and heritage cultures that ‘fit’ with this personal identity [regarding the issue of ‘fit’, see Schwartz et al., 2005]. In this way, it may be possible for the immigrant person’s personal identity to ‘anchor’ her or him and to offset some of the stressors associated with biculturalism.

A different intervention strategy may be required for individuals with multiple heritage cultures who are experiencing difficulty and distress in pinpointing ‘what they are.’ Here, the goal of intervention might be the creation of an individualized mosaic encompassing selected aspects of each heritage culture as well as of the receiving culture. Such intervention efforts might take the form of a typical group-oriented identity workshop, individual counseling, or exercises drawn from the expressive arts [Smyth & Helm, 2003].

Improving Social Institutions’ Support for Immigrant People

With regard to increasing the receptivity of receiving societies to immigrant people, our recommendations go beyond official multiculturalism, which encourages receiving communities to validate immigrants and to be sympathetic to their needs and challenges [Joppke, 2004]. Rather, in countries that receive large immigrant flows, we call for an increase in the specific social services (e.g., translation services, immersion courses, information about school systems, work, and cultural practices, and culturally syntonetic mental health services) designed to help to ease the transition into the receiving society and to facilitate cultural identity change in a supportive environment. Whereas multicultural policies are likely to be limited in their effectiveness because of the tendency for individuals to discriminate against those identified as ‘foreigners’ [Erikson, 1975; Markovic & Manderson, 2002; Mummendey et al., 2001], social institutions designed to increase the recep-

tiveness of the receiving society by providing immigrant people with tangible and instrumental support in reducing economic barriers may be more effective. Although it may not be possible to prevent discrimination, immigrant-friendly social institutions may help protect against the effects of discrimination, which can undermine the process of cultural identity change [Verkuyten & Thijs, 2003] and can negatively affect the immigrant person's personal identity (in terms of self-evaluation) [Verkuyten, 2003]. Although formal services may be helpful to some extent, these services are unlikely to inform immigrant people about the informal social practices that may be instrumental in guiding day-to-day interpersonal interactions in the receiving society, and how one might best participate in these interactions. It is through these informal ways and means that transactions in the 'identity marketplace' – social networks through which personal identity elements are created and used to access societal resources [Côté & Levine, 2002] – occur. Personal identity formed through purposeful transactions within a friendly 'identity marketplace' may be most likely to support the individual during the transition to a new homeland [Côté, 1996; Schwartz, 2005]. As a result, interventions might be designed to help immigrant people to understand the informal 'ways and means' of the receiving society.

Promoting Personal Identity in Disadvantaged Conditions

Interventions to help immigrant people develop a 'positive' personal identity in conditions of socioeconomic disadvantage would have to work within the limitations imposed by the lack of individual and community resources. For example, interventionists would have to identify an array of potential career choices that might be available to people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and young people would then be encouraged to select from among these 'realistic' alternatives. To the extent that more prestigious career paths might be possible through scholarships, grants, and other awards, young people might be convinced to identify more ambitious goals and to earn the academic grades necessary to qualify for these awards. The activities through which participants would be helped to identify potential identity alternatives could take the form of cognitively oriented decision making programs or affectively oriented programs encouraging the search for and actualization of a 'true self' [Schwartz et al., 2005]. As outlined earlier, the format of the intervention would be designed to match the cultural orientations and expectations of the immigrant group in question [Kumpfer et al., 2004], and group-participatory approaches should not be used with youth at high risk for criminal behavior, substance abuse, or other socially destructive outcomes [Dishion et al., 1999].

Conclusion

In this paper, we have advanced the theses that personal identity, at least those aspects that are reasonably independent from 'culturally charged' issues, can stabilize immigrant individuals and protect them from instability and distress created by the acculturation process, and that social and cultural identity guide and

reflect acculturation-related change. Erikson's distinction between personal and social identity was viewed as an appropriate framework for the present analysis, given that his conceptualization included cultural and cross-cultural concerns. Our analysis of social and cultural identity involved integrating aspects of Erikson's theory and social identity theory, as social identity is taken to represent both 'inner solidarity with a group's ideals' [Erikson, 1980, p. 109] and the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that emerge as a result of this solidarity [Tajfel & Turner, 1986].

We also advanced ideas concerning how identity interventions might be used to alleviate distress and other negative developmental outcomes in immigrant youth. Although many young people are able to successfully navigate the challenges and transitions of adolescence and emerging adulthood [Arnett, 1999], others experience various negative developmental outcomes as a result of unsupportive cultural or community contexts [Dahlberg, 1998]. Immigrant youth may be at particular risk for such negative outcomes, in that they must decide how to adapt their cultural identities and maintain a personal identity – while at the same time facing unaccommodating contexts such as poverty, disempowered status in the community, and diminished access to supportive social institutions.

In sum, we have reviewed both explored and unexplored aspects of the relationship between acculturation and identity development and have advanced new theoretical propositions regarding this relationship. It is hoped that the ideas presented here will lead to an expanded knowledge base concerning the links between acculturation and identity development, and that such an expanded knowledge base will find use in helping young immigrant people to navigate the acculturation process as smoothly as possible, and on a positive trajectory for adulthood.

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