The Immigrant's Hyphenated Identity in the Lens of Acculturation Theory

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Abstract:

The United States is a heterogeneous nation that consists of more than a hundred different ethnic groups. This country has a long record of immigration that goes back to the beginning of the seventeenth century and extends to the present time. People who emigrated from culturally diverse regions had to deal with a culture that initially did not embrace them. It was anticipated that these disparate cultural minorities would converge, or "melt," into a single, dominant society. However, this has not happened. After many years of huge immigrant waves, Greek-Americans, Irish-Americans, Asian-Americans, and so forth are among the subcultural groupings and ethnicities that continue to use hyphens in their names despite widespread intermarriage with mainstream society. This research investigates that any minority group living in a multicultural society like America needs to promote an identity that may give them a sense of unity and consolidation, just as a family does. A hyphenated identity can fulfill this need.

1. Hyphenated Identity and Acculturation Theory:

The problem of identity constantly disturbs the immigrant in his diaspora. In "The Theme of Multiple Dislocation and Immigration," Anjana Warren raises questions that revolve around the psyches of individuals such as 'Who am I?', and 'What am I'? , Where am I coming from?', 'Where am I going to?' These questions lead the person to an internal conflict and a huge confusion in searching for an identity. What identity can a person who is a victim of multiple dislocations claim ?A hyphenated identity perhaps Asian-American, Indian-American, and so on (924). So, this dislocation conveys a reflection of a fragmented identity inside the immigrant. Besides, several ethnic and cultural worries, the immigrant has to perform various aspects of identity to help him in facing all these problems.

For more elaboration on the idea of the hyphen, Pedro Rodríguez in his article "Hyphen, Boundaries and Third Spaces," clarifies that the hyphen can be seen as a mark of both separation and union. This ambivalence is essential in the reconceptualization of the position of the person involved in the worldwide processes of diaspora and migration. The hyphen allows him/her to swing

between the preservation of difference and the pursuit of similarity. The increasing interest in highlighting the national, ethnic, and cultural identity of the individual as part of the recent prominence of identity politics has confirmed the validity of the hyphenated forms (58). That is to say, the hyphen grants the immigrant a basis from which he can articulate his identity and his tribulation. From his strategic position being in the "hyphen" or "in-between," the immigrant exceeds the boundaries of race, culture, and ethnicity and produces a special hyphenated identity.

Theorists have associated hyphenated identities with the Acculturation theory. This theory proposes a bi-dimensional framework of cultural change among immigrants, taking into account their attitudes toward both the maintenance of minority culture and social contact with the majority group. The framework outlines four acculturation strategies. In "Conceptual Approaches to Acculturation," John W. Berry gives these strategies different names according to which cultural group (dominant or non-dominant) is being studied. From the point of view of the non-dominant groups, when individuals do not want to preserve their cultural identity and pursue daily interactions with other cultures, they are using the assimilation strategy (23).

In contrast, when individuals place a value on sticking to their original culture and at the same time want to avoid interacting

with others, they are using the separation strategy. When people have an interest in maintaining their original culture during daily interactions with other groups, they use the integration strategy. In this case, there is some degree of cultural integrity, and at the same time, they seek, as a member of an ethnic-cultural group, to participate as an integral part of the larger social society. Lastly, the marginalization strategy is used when there is little concern for cultural maintenance and in having relationships with others. Although marginalization can be a strategy used by people to deal with their various acculturative situations, it can also result from failed trials at assimilation combined with unsuccessful endeavors at participating in the larger society (Berry 24).

Alteration in self-definition and identification is considered a remarkable aspect of the Acculturation Theory. Berry argues that "ethnic and cultural identity is related to a preference for separation, a national identity predicts assimilation, a combination of both identities, as in a hyphenated identity, predicts integration and no clear identity predicts marginalization." (qtd.in Bélanger and Verkuyten143). Consequently, one can say that hyphenated identities and integration processes are connected. Despite that, the relation between identities and acculturation profiles could differ between various national contexts.

2. Bicultural Identity and its relation with Acculturation Theory:

The concept of bicultural identity is closely interwoven with acculturation. In his article "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation," Berry illustrates that when individuals from non-dominant cultural groups, such as ethnic minorities, acculturate, they are faced with two important questions, the first, is it important to maintain one's original culture and identity? Second, is it important to maintain intergroup relations with the dominant cultural group? The yes-or-no responses to these two questions intersect to form four acculturation orientations. An integration orientation occurs when an individual values both the maintenance of their original culture and their relationship with the dominant group; but if neither is important marginalization results. If an individual only values their original culture separation occurs; however, if an individual only values his relationship with the dominant group, then assimilation occurs (qtd. in Chu et al. 230). Therefore, acculturation is a process through which cultural identity can change .

Based on the previous quotation, the concept of a bicultural identity can be considered an important outcome of the integration process, whereby ethnic minorities integrate their heritage culture and the dominant culture into their identity. However, researchers

from different fields argue that a bicultural identity may be more appropriately conceptualized as a hyphenated cultural identity which represents a 'third' identity that is not merely reducible to the sum of its parts (Chue et al. 231). Based on the previous quotation, the concept of a bicultural identity can be considered as an important outcome of the integration process, whereby ethnic minorities integrate their heritage culture and the dominant culture into their identity. However, researchers from different fields argue that a bicultural identity may be more appropriately conceptualized as a hyphenated cultural identity, which represents a 'third' identity that is not merely reducible to the sum of its parts (Chu et al. 231).

Under the current conditions of globalization and migration, many countries transformed into multicultural societies. Which, ethnic minorities are consequently beginning to be identified as bicultural. In "Biculturalism amongst ethnic minorities," Fiona A. White et al. explain that bicultural identities become increasingly complex. They identify the concept of bicultural identity, as it is the outcome of experiencing two cultures simultaneously. As values, traditions, and behaviors are relevant to one's heritage culture and at the same time, the dominant national culture is integrated within one's self (229).

Similarly, Roccas and Brewer in their article, "Social Identity Complexity" clarify that individuals who share both ethnic

heritage and residence in the host society can demonstrate bicultural adaptation by locating their cultural identity at the intersection of the ethnic and the national levels. Thus, they can form a blended bicultural identity. In other words, those individuals are capable of integrating multiple and distinct identities coherently. With this clarification, terms such as African American, Latin American, and Asian American imply more than the combination of two separate groups; they represent unique cultural formation derived from the specific experiences of integrating an ethnic-cultural identity with the American context. Such hyphenated identity is often associated with heightened ethnic consciousness and a type of nationalist ideology within the political arena (92). In the context of acculturation, this blended bicultural identity is more than the simple fusion of two identities; it represents the unique hyphenated identity that emerges as a third-social identity to achieve the required coexistence in multi-ethnic societies.

At this juncture, Eileen Chu et al. in their article, "Biculturalism amongst ethnic minorities", state that some ethnic minorities show a strong preference for common group similarities (e.g., the national identity) and ethnic group differences (e.g., the ethnic identity) simultaneously. This finding extends to include hyphenated cultural identities, which allow ethnic minorities to maintain a sense of duality in the intergroup setting, without the

need to abandon either the ethnic or national identity. In contrast, however, majority group members show a preference for common or national identity representations, whereby both majorities and minorities need to see themselves under a single and shared identity (e.g., we are all Americans.) These different identity preferences may arise from different motivations. Specifically, a dual identity representation allows ethnic minorities to satisfy their motivation to challenge the status quo and improve their position in society, whereas a common identity representation allows ethnic majorities to satisfy their need to maintain their privileged status and preserve the system that characterizes them (233).

Notwithstanding, these preferred identities might depend on the cultural social, and historical context, which in turn may influence minority and majority motivations. For example, in contexts where ethnic minorities struggle to differentiate themselves from the dominant culture, minority individuals may be less motivated to integrate a second cultural identity into their self-concept. Similarly, in contexts where ethnic minorities strive for assimilation and equal status with the dominant group, minority individuals may be motivated to relinquish their minority identity and just identify with the majority. Therefore, bicultural identification may only be functional insofar as it permits the minority group to achieve their acculturation goals in the majority culture. The degree of hyphenated identification may depend on the

specific historical and cultural context of intergroup relations, which may affect individuals' acculturation orientations (Chu et al. 234).

In recent years, a solid set of research on bicultural identity has been made to show both how two identities can be integrated and how can particular situations activate one or another identity. Discussing the idea that individuals can hold two or more cultural orientations simultaneously from a socio-cognitive point of view, Nguyen and Martínez in their article, "Multicultural Identity," show that bicultural individuals shift between their two cultural orientations in response to cultural cues. This process is called "cultural frame-switching" (CFS). Bicultural individuals' ability to engage in CFS has been documented in multiple behavioral domains such as attribution personality, self-views, identity, self-construal, and cooperation. The cultural frame-switching process is not merely a quick response to cultural indications; rather, it occurs when a particular cultural schema influences the behavior of the individuals. Also, the cultural cues needed in this process must be related to the situation whether implicitly or explicitly (80).

Another notable notion to be mentioned here is the idea that social identities provide individuals with a strong sense of belonging, which is important for adaptation and resilience against adversity. Nguyen and Martinez in their article, "Biculturalism and

Adjustment," affirm that there is a positive relationship between bicultural identification and adjustment (e.g., life satisfaction, self-esteem, academic achievement, and career success). While their findings suggest that identification with any culture (ethnic, dominant, or both) was positively associated with adjustment, this relationship was the strongest for bicultural identification. This may be a result of the increased flexibility that bicultural individuals develop as they navigate both the dominant and ethnic cultures; this finding might explain why bicultural identification is associated with greater resilience against adversity and discrimination (124).

3. Acculturation Strategies

Acculturation is a continuous process, as long as different cultural groups are in contact. That is what John Berry affirms in his article, "Acculturation: Living Successfully in two cultures," stating that, it takes different forms of adaptation between groups in contact in order to make a successful cultural communication. This adaptation also involves learning the languages of one another, sharing one another's food preferences, and adopting forms of dress and social behaviors that are distinctive of each culture. These mutual adaptations are sometimes easily accomplished through processes of culture shedding and cultural learning, but they can also create cultural conflict and acculturative stress during intercultural interactions (699).

One key feature of all acculturation phenomena is the variability through which they take place. There are large group and individual differences in how people seek to go about their acculturation and in the degree to which they achieve satisfactory coexistence. In addition to cultural group and individual variation, there are variations within one family. Acculturation often occurs at different rates, and with different goals, it sometimes leads to an increase in conflict and stress among the same family members (Berry 700).

The portrayal of acculturation strategies was based on the hypothesis that individuals of ethnic or non-dominant groups have the free will to choose how they want to acculturate. Certainly, this is not always the case. John Berry in his book, *Conceptual Approaches to Acculturation* (2003), demonstrates that when the dominant group imposes specific forms of acculturation or restrictions on the choices of non-dominant groups, then other terms need to be used. Hence, a third dimension was added : acculturation expectations and the powerful role played by the dominant group in influencing how mutual acculturation would take place. When the ethnic acculturating group sought assimilation, the process was termed the melting pot, but when the dominant group demanded assimilation, it was called the pressure cooker. When the dominant group forces separation, it is called segregation, and when the dominant group imposes

marginalization, it is called ethnocide or exclusion. Finally, when diversity is an accepted feature of the larger society as a whole, the process of integration is termed multiculturalism (25).

Integration can only be freely chosen and successfully achieved by ethnic minority communities when the dominant society has a general and comprehensive tendency towards cultural diversity. Accordingly, to achieve integration in a multicultural society, mutual accommodation is required, involving widespread acceptance by both groups of the cultural diversity between them. This strategy requires ethnic groups to adopt the fundamental values of the larger society and, at the same time, the dominant group has to prepare its national institutions (e.g., education, health, labor) to meet the needs of all groups living together under the umbrella of the new multi-ethnic society (Berry 24).

For a deeper understanding of the acculturation experience, in her article "Immigrant Adaptation and Patterns of Acculturation," Margaret A. Gibson asserts that one must have enough knowledge of the immigrants' situation in their homelands before emigration. This knowledge should include things like their social standing back home, their educational levels, occupational skills, and even their previous exposure to urban and Western cultures and the reasons that led them to leave their homelands. Those who come primarily for economic gain, for example, may be

more willing than political refugees to take up the ways of their American neighbors and to encourage their offspring to do so as well. Rapid acculturation may even be a conscious strategy for achieving their economic goals (20).

As American society has become more diverse over the decades, some have begun to wonder whether immigrants and their descendants become truly American or not. The U.S. president, Theodore Roosevelt, 100 years ago, said: "There is no room in this country for hyphenated Americanism . . . There is no such thing as a hyphenated American who is a good American. The only man who is a good American is the man who is an American and nothing else." This opinion completely agrees with the words of another U.S. president, Woodrow Wilson: "Any man who carries a hyphen about with him carries a dagger that he is ready to plunge into the vitals of this Republic." (qtd. in Deaux 935). This belief of skepticism and mistrust has a long history in American thought. Although immigration is a big source of the formation of the American mixed races society, still the blending of two ethnic strains is troublesome to many people.

Stereotypes and caricatures spread by media also come into play and put the immigrant' status as an "American" into question. To simplify the matters, Salman Akhtar in his book, *Immigration and Acculturation* (2010), explains that the assumption that

someone with an unfamiliar name, dark skin, and/or "Oriental" facial features cannot be really American combines with ignorance of differences among various immigrant groups themselves. The question "Where are you from?" or "Where were you born?" is frequently asked of the children of immigrants. Actually, it is easy to answer. It is the implication that somehow one is not "really" American, one can't be American, or one is not American enough that hurts (180).

What does it mean to be an American and what is expected of those who are, or who wish to be, citizens of the country? These questions and many others related to the issues of patriotism and nationalism come to the fore in the American discussion circles. Kay Deaux, in her article, "To Be an American," illustrates that it is argued by some that one cannot be faithful to two cultures, and any proof of sticking to a culture of origin is assumed to mean disloyalty to the country of residence. The argument goes further than just the relative significance of two identity categories. Beyond the belief that the greater importance of one means lesser importance of another lies a meaning system that often defines the two identities as conflicting. That is, what it means to be Chinese or Mexican or Dominican is sometimes seen as qualitatively different and possibly incompatible with what it means to be American. Thus, a person's loyalty to the country of origin is threatening not just, because one is more important than the other

is, but also because one is thought to hold values that are not on an equal level with American standards (934). Clearly, this hidden implication suggests that one must choose to be loyal to only one group. In the American case, immigrants have to express a deep belief in identifying themselves with the United States as a country and reject loyalty to their country of origin with its values and cultures. Otherwise, those immigrants will be undesirable from American society and will be accused of disloyalty and lack of patriotism and a sense of belonging.

Recently, the issue of patriotism has been a big concern in the United States, not only because of the country's war on terror but also because of the fast population changes it has been experiencing. Some critics such as Patrick Buchanan charge the immigrants with disloyalty, saying: "Millions of immigrants bring no allegiance to America and remain loyal to the lands of their birth. Though they occupy more and more rooms in our home, they are not part of our family. Nor do they wish to be" (13). Many Americans likewise compare today's "bad" immigrants to yesterday's "good" immigrants when talking about immigration (qtd. in Schildkraut 849-850).

In the light of contemporary concerns about the impact of immigration and ethnic diversity on American national identity, Deborah J. Schildkraut, in her article, "National Identity in the

United States," states that the concept of liberalism may be the starting point for any investigation into how Americans define what being American means. The tenets of liberalism are at the heart of the American Creed, which is widely considered to be the central set of ideals that defines American identity. Liberalism is based on the principles of freedom, equality, opportunity, the rule of law, and minimal government intervention in the private lives of citizens (858).

After all that has been mentioned above, polemic questions arise at the top of this discussion: whether immigrants can maintain their values, experiences, and aspirations and still be full citizens of the new country? Can cultural loyalty and newly formed patriotism co-exist? Some researchers would suggest that the answer to these questions is no. However, other researchers believe that the data suggest otherwise. Social psychologists claim that social situations are very complex that complicated person-situation interactions are likely to be the rule, and that interpersonal dynamics can change a situation from one moment to the next (Deaux 941). This point of view refutes all the claims that immigrants are doomed to be disloyal to their host countries as long as they hold a hyphenated identity. Since situations and interactions are dynamic and diverse, immigrants are free to choose how they want to acculturate and demonstrate their sense of citizenship in society. In addition to

employing the knowledge and tools to inform and enlarge, what it means to be an American.

Conclusion:

Just as obvious, great numbers of people in the U.S. embrace two or more identity categories. They can blend them in somehow in the same living experience. Although no single formula can be applied to the immigrant experience, it appears that immigrants are able to deal, either simultaneously or sequentially, with more than one category of membership. In fact, as many Americans today are immigrants or descendants of immigrants of various ethnicities, it is important to take into consideration the racial and ethnic differences between the immigrants besides the fact that being Americans is an important part of their identity formation. Taking into account that this blended or hyphenated identity does not contradict the immigrants' loyalty toward their country of residence.

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انشطار الذات لدي المهاجر في ضوء نظرية التثاقف

ملخص:

تعتبر الولايات المتحدة أمة غير متجانسة تتكون من أكثر من مائة مجموعة عرقية مختلفة. وتتمتع هذه البلاد بسجل طويل من الهجرة يعود إلى بداية القرن السابع عشر ويمتد إلى وقتنا الحاضر. وكان على الأشخاص الذين هاجروا من مناطق متنوعة ثقافيًا أن يتعاملوا مع ثقافة لم تحتضنهم في البداية ولم ترحب بهم. وكان من المتوقع أن تتقارب هذه الأقليات الثقافية المتباينة، أو "تذوب"، في مجتمع واحد مهيمن، ومع ذلك، هذا لم يحدث. وبعد سنوات عديدة من موجات الهجرة الضخمة، أصبح الأميركيون اليونانيون، والأميركيون الأيرلنديون، والأميركيون الآسيويون، وما غير ذلك من الأعراق المختلفة، من بين المجموعات الثقافية الفرعية والأعراق التي تستمر في استخدام الواصلات في أسمائها على الرغم من التزاوج على نطاق واسع مع التيار الرئيسي في المجتمع. يبحث هذا البحث في أن أي أقلية تعيش في مجتمع متعدد الثقافات مثل أمريكا تحتاج إلى تعزيز هوية قد تمنحهم إحساسًا بالوحدة والتماسك، تمامًا كما تفعل الأسرة. حيث يمكن للهوية الواصلة أن تلبي هذه الحاجة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المهاجرون، الأقلية العرقية، نظرية التثاقف، الهوية المركبة، الهوية ثنائية الثقافة.