Acculturation of Iranian Immigrants

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Iranian Immigrants

- Young Adults
- Families
- Grand Parents
- Religious Refugees
- Political Refugees

Immigration reasons before the Revolution

- Higher Education
- Employment / Business Opportunities
- Choosing to move forward

Immigration reasons after the Revolution

- Higher Education
- Employment / Business Opportunities
- Choosing to move forward
- Running away from
  - Lack of personal freedom
    - Religious views
    - Political views
    - Choosing your attire
    - Dating
    - Women being suppressed
  - Being drafted into the military
  - War
  - Unemployment
  - Economic depression

Psychological Process of choosing to Immigrate

- Moving toward Pleasure vs. Moving away from pain
- Legal vs. Illegal commute
- Multiple destination
- Process of Change / Grief / Loss (Kubler Ross)
  - Denial
  - Anger
  - Bargaining
  - Depression
  - Acceptance

Acculturation

- **Ac·cul·tur·a·tion**:
- **Dictionary.com**
    - The process of adopting the cultural traits or social patterns of another group.
    - The result of this process.
- **American Heritage Dictionary**
    - The modification of the culture of a group or individual as a result of contact with a different culture.
    - The process by which the culture of a particular society is instilled in a human from infancy onward.
- **American Heritage New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, Third Edition**
    - The learning of the ideas, values, conventions, and behavior that characterize a social group. (*See* socialization.) Acculturation is also used to describe the results of contact between two or more different cultures; a new, composite culture emerges, in which some existing cultural features are combined, some are lost, and new features are generated. Usually one culture is dominant (as in the case of colonization).

The New Land

- New Language
- New Physical Surrounding
- New Laws
- New System
  - Government
  - School
  - Employment
  - Economic System
  - Business
- Social Class change
- Anonymity
- Complete Dependency
  - New Mate
  - Family Members

Impact on the Family Dynamic

- Role of Woman vs. Man
- Role of Parents
- Teens
- Young Adults
- Three generations co-habiting

Role of Woman vs. Man

- Head of the household role
- Economic responsibility shift
- Gender responsibility shift
- Shift in dating rules
- Shift in marital rules
- Study by *Shirin Ghaffarian*
  - The process of acculturation among Iranian Immigrants living in the US.
- Study by *Ali Akbar Mahdi*
  - Perception of Gender Roles among female Iranian Immigrants in the US.

The process of acculturation among Iranian immigrants living in the United States

(Shirin Ghaffarian, *Journal of Social Psychology*)

- The process of acculturation among Iranian immigrants living in the United States was explored; specifically, the relationships between acculturation and mental health, age, gender, level of education, and length of residence in the United States were examined. Acculturation was measured via R. H. Mendoza's (1989) Cultural Life Style Inventory, which includes 3 components: cultural resistance, cultural incorporation, and cultural shift.

- **A significant but slight relationship was found between acculturation and mental health: As cultural resistance increased, scores signifying better mental health decreased; as cultural incorporation and cultural shift increased, scores signifying better mental health increased. Also, Iranian men were found to have higher levels of cultural shift, lower levels of cultural resistance, and higher scores signifying better mental health than Iranian women.**

PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER ROLES AMONG FEMALE IRANIAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES

(Ali Akbar Mahdi)

- Migration has been a source of autonomy for the Iranian women, providing them with better opportunities for education, employment, personal freedom, and even divorce from difficult marriages. These women depend less on their husbands as they gain their own income, reduce or suspend obligations to their husbands' families, and escape the patriarchal control of their own immediate families. As other researchers have demonstrated (Kamalkhani, 1988; Bauer, 1991; Tohidi, 1993), migration to new lands has meant a breakdown of traditional norms for Iranian women.

- **Despite their liberal attitudes, Iranian women immigrants have neither abandoned all their cultural values nor accepted all elements of the dominant value system governing gender relations in the United States. Iranian immigrant women have similar concerns about their roles within the family and the larger society as women in Western societies, but they are more cautious and selective in their embrace of feminism as a model for readdressing gender inequality within the Iranian family. While supporting women's rights, most of them do not call themselves "feminist." Many criticize the individualism of American women, believing that more sacrifice and dedication preserves a marriage, especially when there are children involved.**

- **All in all, while Iranian immigrant women are moving away from traditional understandings of gender roles and sexuality, they are developing their own unique synthesis of attributes and values representing the cultural realities of both their past and present. The cultural and social characteristics of their newly adopted society and the structural fragility of their identities in a liminal zone allow them to pick and choose freely from their inherited and adopted realities (Naficy, 1993; Mahdi, 1998).**

Role of Parents

- Children's school
- Children's parents who are from other ethnicities
- Teen dating and sex
- Teen and young adult using drugs
- Teen education

Teens

- Identity crisis
  - Survey done by *Mojgan Kahen* (Khayam Iranian cultural center of Brussels, Belgium)
    - Identifying vs. separating self from family values and rituals
    - Identifying vs. separating self from the Iranian Culture
    - Betrayal of the Family system
    - Pretense of belonging to both/or one culture without internalization
- Family's acceptance of the new land culture
- New land's acceptance of the immigrants in general /or/ Iranians
- I'm Iranian, It is in my blood // BUT// I don't think like an Iranian

Acculturation Stress and Drug Use among Iranian Youth

(Masood Zangeneh, Mona Nouroozifar, Ebrahim Kantini)

- When it comes to cultural transition, the youth are the most vulnerable members of these migrating families. Upon arrival to a new country, they may find it especially difficult to face the challenge of learning a new language, finding replacements for their friends and relatives they have left behind in their home country, and continuing to perform well academically under the circumstances. While many adjust successfully, others have difficulty coping and meeting these challenges.
Getting through adolescence is difficult enough for anybody. Early adolescence is indeed "unmatched in the juxtaposition of simultaneous changes -cognitive, biological, social, and emotional - by any other period in the life span". Throughout the adolescent years, young people "tackle two major tasks...identity formation and development of self-worth and self-efficacy, both of which are shaped by contextual as well as individual factors.

- **Learning how to balance the cultural tug between home and school inherent in this identity formation process is painful. Many youth who are unable to cope with the immense amount of stress involved in this experience emotional difficulties, become socially and economically marginalized, succumb to alcohol and drug, show poor academic performance or even drop out of school prematurely, and in many cases, get involved in criminal behavior.**
A number of studies, for instance, have shown that immigrants in general but youth especially turn to risky behavior as a means of dealing with the stress of moving to a different culture. In fact, studies have shown that substance use and similar risky behavior among immigrants may be greater than that of their country of origin, and in some cases, their country of destination.

- This result indicates that those who have difficulty in integrating with the host culture tend to suffer from faulty coping mechanism and adjustment difficulty. This negative effect does not point to any conclusive cause and effect relationship, however, it suggests that **faulty coping mechanism such as drug use hinders immigration transition and on the same token, those who experience immigration transition difficulty resort to destructive behaviors such as drug use to cope with this stress.**

Young Adults

- Family time
- Economic dependent vs. independent young adult
- Choosing future path toward career
- Dating & Marriage – Iranian vs. others
- Living separately

Three Generations Co-habiting

- – The sandwich effect
- – Who is the parent?
- – Western concept of privacy vs. Eastern concept of enmeshment
- – Purposelessness of the elders in the new land
  - • Living separately
  - • Adult day cares
  - • Home for the elderly

Unhealthy Coping Mechanism

- Domination / Anger / Violence
- Isolation
- Depression
- Addiction : Drugs / Alcohol/ Food/ Sex/ Gambling
- Extra – Marital Relationships
- Reactive Sexual Relationships
- Joining Violent Groups

Healthy Coping Mechanism

- Learning the *new language* and Upholding and utilizing the mother language
- Learning the *new land's* culture
    - Choosing aspects of the culture that are favorable and healthy
    - Implementing the new chosen culture into daily living
- Learning the background reasons for the original cultural values and rituals
- Upholding rituals from the original culture
- Allowing self to grow and add vs. switch to
    - New belief systems
    - New behaviors
    - New rituals
        - In the areas of :
            » Intimate Relationship
            » Marriage
            » Parenting
            » Friendship
            » Family Relations
            » School
            » Employment

Thank You for Listening