Activity 9.5

ACCULTURATION STRATEGIES

Much cross-cultural research has focused on acculturation. That is, the process by which people adjust to contact with a culture other than their own. John Berry (1994; 2001) has developed a model for understanding the strategies that people use in acculturation. This activity involves applying Berry’s model to your own acculturation experience in order to better understand this process.

Directions: Think about an experience you have had acculturating, or adjusting, to another culture. You may have traveled outside of your country or to an unfamiliar region of your own country. Perhaps you have spent time with an ethnic group or social class different from your own. For people entering an unfamiliar academic culture, adjusting to college may even involve acculturation. In the space provided below, describe your acculturation experience. Then answer the questions based on Berry’s model in order to analyze your own acculturation experience.

Description of your acculturation experience:
John Berry's (1994; 2001) model includes four types of acculturation strategies: Integration, Assimilation, Separation, and Marginalization. Read the descriptions of these strategies below and think about which best describes your own acculturation strategy.

- **Integration** -- The individual maintains his or her own cultural identity while at the same time becomes a participant in the host culture.

- **Assimilation** – The individual gives up his or her own cultural identity and becomes absorbed into the host culture.

- **Separation** -- The individual maintains his or her own cultural identity and rejects involvement with the host culture.

- **Marginalization** -- The individual does not identify with or participate in either his or her own culture or the host culture.

1. Which of the four modes above best characterizes your acculturation strategy? Please explain.
Berry's (2001) model also includes four types of acculturation strategies adopted by the host culture: Multiculturalism, Melting Pot, Segregation, and Exclusion. Read the descriptions of these strategies below and think about which best describes the orientation of the society or group into which you acculturated.

- **Multiculturalism** – The society values and fosters diversity.
- **Melting Pot** – The society seeks assimilation.
- **Segregation** – The society forces separation.
- **Exclusion** – The society imposes marginalization.

2. Which of the four modes above best characterizes the acculturation orientation adopted by the host culture in your experience? Please explain.

3. Given the acculturation orientation of the host culture, do you believe that the acculturation strategy you adopted was effective? Please explain.
4. One criticism of Berry's model is that it treats acculturation as if it is static. A different model of acculturation, created by Teresa LaFramboise and colleagues (1993), addresses this concern. Their model, developed to address the acculturation experiences of ethnic minority groups within a dominant culture, includes the strategy of Alternation. Alternation refers to a strategy in which one moves back and forth between one's own culture and the host culture depending on the situation. Did you use alternation as a strategy in your acculturation experience? Please explain.

5. How would you apply the different acculturation strategies to attitudes about bilingualism and language use? Please consider both the perspective of the individual and the society at large.

References: