Deculturation: A Secret of Birth

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Abstract: The Berry model, well known in cross-cultural psychology, categorizes acculturation patterns into four types based on yes–no questions regarding the retention of traditional culture and the relationship with the larger society. Business administration and various other research fields have attempted to use the model due to its simple clarity. However, doubts exist regarding (i) the feasibility of deculturation (marginalization); (ii) the validity of a label “integration,” and (iii) the mutual independence of the four cells. In fact, these doubts stem from the process of formulation of the Berry model. Berry originally categorized 24 question items used in the surveys of individuals belonging to minority populations according to the three labels of assimilation, integration, and rejection. Moreover, Berry used yes–no questions to summarize the characteristics of these labels and added a fourth label, that is, deculturation (marginalization). This format became the prototype for the Berry model.

Keywords: acculturation, Berry model, deculturation, marginalization

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A part of this paper was originally published as Ohkawa (2009) in Japanese.
1. Introduction: Berry Model and Its Problems

Currently, many attempts have been made to apply the Berry model as a model of acculturation \(^1\) used to explain various phenomena. The Berry model is a bidimensional model of acculturation proposed by John Widdup Berry. As shown in Table 1, the model has an extraordinarily concise structure with a \(2 \times 2\) matrix of two yes–no questions: the first query concerns whether one should retain one’s own cultural identity and customs, whereas the second query pertains to whether one should seek contact with the larger society.

Using the two axes of cultural identity retention and larger society contact, the Berry model was developed with research focusing on traditional minorities impacted by western culture. This explains the use of the term “larger society” in one of the questions. The Berry model is characteristic in its simple categorization of individual attitudes toward contact with new cultures. This model was later applied to various psychology-related studies conducted by other researchers. Examples include analyses of the model’s application to immigration (e.g., Kosic, 2002) and of psychological development among youth (e.g., Handelsman, Gottlieb, & Knapp, 2005).

The Berry model has also been used in business administration. In the 1980s, focus was placed on mergers and acquisitions (M&A) as a type of opportunity for members of an organization to come into contact with a new culture, and the “organizational culture fit” in M&A came to be regarded as an issue (Buono, Bowditch, & Lewis, 1985). Later, attempts were made to analyze the propriety of M&A

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\(^1\) A broadly accepted definition of “acculturation” is as follows: “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936).
based on acculturation (Nahavandi & Malekzadeh, 1988), and the methodology of categorization with two axes of “original” cultural identity and attitude toward a “new” organization influenced other studies (e.g., Cartwright & Cooper, 1993; Elsass & Veiga, 1994; Larsson & Lubatkin, 2001).

The Berry model can certainly be easily and intuitively understood. Thus, other fields have found it easier to apply the Berry model. Even in business administration, it is easy to imagine more expanded applications of the model. For example, according to the model outline that shows the relevance of individual inclinations to acculturation, the model can be applied to analyze a specific individual’s influence within an organization on changes in cultural identity of that organization (Sato, 2014). On the other hand, focusing on the details of the model, if one assumes that these two questions show the relationship between the cultural identity of an individual and the organization to which that individual belongs, it is also possible to easily show the relevance of these two questions to such studies as those on lukewarm feelings in Japanese firms.

**Table 1.** A model of possible forms of cultural relations in plural societies

| Question 2: Are positive relations with the larger society of value, and to be sought? | Question 1: Are cultural identity and customs of value, and to be retained? |
|---|---|
| Yes | Yes |
| integration | assimilation |
| No | segregation-separation | deculturation |

*Source: Berry (1984), p. 12, Table 2.1.*
(Takahashi, 2013; Takahashi, Ohkawa, & Inamizu, 2014) or on the effect of inpatriates on Japanese firms (Kim, 2013).

Simultaneously, a number of studies have asserted that the Berry model has definite flaws (e.g., Demes & Geeraert, 2014; Rudmin, 2003; Rudmin & Ahmadzadeh, 2001). For example, Schwartz and Zamboanga (2008) raise three concerns. The first pertains to the validity of “deculturation” (“marginalization” in their model). 2 Specifically, how immigrants develop cultural identities having rejected both inherited cultures and new cultures alike can be considered as ambiguous. Furthermore, both questions being answered in the affirmative indicates biculturalism; however, several types of this pattern exist and some feel that integration is only one of those types. Finally, there also exist doubts regarding the mutual independence of the four types of cells within the Berry model. In other words, the four cells depend only on a single factor. In sum, the criticism of this model is directed at the consistency between the responses to the two questions and the categorized cells.

The existence of a cell labeled “deculturation” (or “marginalization”), which is the first item noted by Schwartz and Zamboanga (2008), is unique, and attracts attention. This is because it should be the cell that typifies acculturation; however, depending on the meaning of the question, the cell indicates the non-existence of a culture that has been retained or selected, which is paradoxical at first glance. The cell for deculturation (marginalization) is characteristic of the Berry model and is emblematic of criticism of the model.

Though popular, why did the model include defects that impact its consistency? One efficacious approach to this fundamental concern is to first review Berry’s suggestion of this model. Such a review of the

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2 For the matrix cell in the Berry model where both questions are answered “no,” some studies use the “deculturation” label, whereas others use the “marginalization” label. However, the overall structure is the same in both cases.
Berry model as initially proposed by Berry (1976) is given below, enabling us to clarify this concern by explicating the process through which the Berry model was developed.

2. Development Process: Berry’s Initial Purpose

The Berry (1976) model, well known in cross-cultural psychology, combined psychology with anthropology. It focused on “ecology,” “culture,” and “behavior,” defining relationships among them wherein a) human “behavior” is defined by “culture,” and b) “culture” is defined by “ecology.” In addition, it employed psychological methods to clarify a) the relationship of “culture” leading to “behavior” and used anthropological findings to clarify b) the relationship of “ecology” leading to “behavior.” More explicitly, Berry’s study gathered samples from the western society, hunter communities, and gatherer communities and examined their relevance between independent variables comprising acculturation, ecology, culture, and psychological trends as dependent variables.

Samples

The participants of the survey, conducted by Berry (1976), belonged to multiple communities in North America, Oceania, Africa, and Europe. Furthermore, the survey used ethnography, an anthropological method, to explain each community. The survey was conducted at three distinct times, with a sample of Caucasian

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3 However, Berry (1974, pp. 18–20) proposes categorizing patterns of minorities within culturally diverse societies into eight types based on a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ matrix, using three yes–no questions that ask 1) whether identities are maintained; 2) whether positive relationships are held with controlling groups; and 3) whether the choices in the previous two questions were voluntary. However, Berry (1976) is thought to be the first case of a prototype acculturation model with four categories. This model was frequently used by Berry himself, along with other researchers.
societies primarily constituting industry and agriculture, a minority sample of agriculture and livestock industries, and a minority community of hunters and/or gatherers.

**Independent variables**

Acculturation and eco-cultural indices are the independent variables used in the analysis of Berry (1976), with the latter further comprising an ecological index and a cultural index.

The acculturation index is coded such that it increases as the level of western culture increases, with scores being given to each community. The ecological index scores on exploitive patterns, settlement patterns, and the mean size of community. For example, the sample of “small groups migrating while living a gatherer lifestyle” is the highest on the ecological index. Finally, the more a society is stratified and the greater the level of demands for socialization, the lower the score on the cultural index.

**Dependent variables**

“Behavior” is the dependent variable. However, behavior is categorized into “differentiation” and “acculturative stress.” “Acculturative stress” is the level of stress felt by an individual exposed to acculturation.

“Differentiation” refers to psychological differentiation. Berry (1976) completely relies on the previous studies of Witkin, Dyk, Faterson, Goodenough, and Karp (1962) and considers the preference for one’s own judgment and not falling into alignment with others “psychological differentiation.” Berry (1976) considers this lack of alignment and the preference for one’s own judgment to be individual “behavior” and uses cognitive tests to measure psychological differentiation.
Berry’s result

With independent and dependent variables in place, a number of hypotheses\(^4\) is given, which is then validated on both samples (communities, peoples, or cultures) and individuals. The results of the validation showed that “no hypothesis was left entirely without support” (Berry, 1976, p. 200). Judging from his expression, Berry’s (1976) goal was mostly achieved.

3. Berry Model Invented

In Berry’s (1976) analysis, acculturative stress—a dependent variable—was measured using psychological attitudes toward 1) stress (a 20-item neurological disease checklist), 2) marginality (a 14-item marginality scale), and 3) 24 question items related to psychological attitudes toward one’s own group as well as the group of others (i.e., western culture). Furthermore, a subscale label of A (“assimilation”), I (“integration”), or R (“rejection”) is affixed to each question item, such as “Assimilation (A): nine items; Integration (I): nine items; Rejection (R): six items.” Question items are rated from 1 to 5, with 5 being “strongly agree.” The aforementioned three subscales are totaled, and each community is analyzed for the mean, standard deviation, and correlation coefficient.

The results of the analysis, however, are not noteworthy. The fact that the relationships among the three modes were categorized as the question items is notable, as summarized in Table 2. The horizontal axis of Table 2 indicates the question whether traditional culture is valuable and should be retained. The vertical axis indicates the question whether positive relations with the larger society should be sought. Each question can be answered with a yes or a no and

\(^4\) Berry (1976) proposed 13 types of hypotheses. See Berry (1976) p. 132, Table 6.10 for more information.
categorized according to respondents’ feeling if a traditional lifestyle should be abandoned or maintained and whether western culture is desirable. A $2 \times 2$ matrix is constructed with the label of the appropriate subscale entered into the four cells. However, only three types of subscale exist, leaving the bottom right cell in Table 2 empty. This cell is filled with the “deculturation” label, completing the matrix. In fact, Berry’s study (1976) was the first instance, suggesting this type of model (as far as can be ascertained from the available literature). In other words, this was the formation of the Berry model.

Q1. (R) The Indians should be completely self-sufficient so they do not need to co-operate with the whites in any way.

Q2. (I) It is better if an Indian marries with (sic) one of his people rather than with (sic) a white.

Q3. (A) Any Indian who is successful should try to forget that he is one of Indian descent.

Q4. (R) It is better for the Indians to stay on their reserves than to come into the city where they encounter difficulties.

Q5. (R) The Indians should only co-operate with the whites when they have something to happen.

Q6. (I) Having a National Indians Organization is not really a good idea since it makes the Indians different from other Canadians.

Q7. (R) There are no aspects of the whites’ culture that might be beneficial to the Indians.

Q8. (A) The Indians should co-operate as little as possible with the whites.

Q9. (A) The only real way an Indian can become successful is by dissociating himself from other Indians.

Q10. (A) Any Indian living within the white community should try and behave in the same way as those around him.

Q11. (I) The Indians should do all they can to ensure the survival
of their people.

Q12. (A) Although it is alright for Indian parents to maintain their cultural differences within the white community, they should encourage their children to be just like other Canadians.

Q13. (A) The social activities of the Indians should be restricted to the Indians themselves.

Q14. (A) If a number of Indians are working on the same job, they should be put in the same section so they are together.

Q15. (I) Encouraging the Indians to stay as a group is only hindering their acceptance into the community.

Q16. (I) Most of the Indians living in the city today are not really interested in knowing anything about the life or culture or their ancestors.

Q17. (R) The Indians should lead their own way of life, independently of the rest of society.

Q18. (I) So little remains today of the Indian culture that it is not really worth saving.

Q19. (I) Focusing attention on the Indians’ traditional way of life is only preventing them from making any progress in society.

Q20. (I) The Indians should seek their friends among other Indians.

Q21. (A) The Indians should act as a separate community in every way within society.

Q22. (I) Indian children should be encouraged to choose other Indians as their playmates.

Q23. (A) If an Indian sets up his own business, he should try and employ Indians to work for him.

Q24. (R) The fact that Canada has only developed since the arrival of the whites clearly shows that the Indians must follow the example of the whites if they themselves are to make any progress.
4. Discussion

A review of Berry’s study revealed that the prototype of the Berry model was created to show the relationship between groups of question items, and that labels were at first limited to “assimilation,” “integration,” and “rejection,” with “deculturation” used to fill in the remaining empty cell. In addition, two important points are observed while closely examining the question items in the list. Firstly, most of the question items and the three subscales either do not match or have an unclear relationship (e.g., 2, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24). Secondly, the correspondence between the 24 items and the two questions in Table 2 is also unclear at multiple instances. Given these problems, it is difficult even to accept the fact that Table 2 summarizes the 24 question items.

However, this prototype was developed into the Berry model as a representation of acculturation modes, and, as previously noted, the

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5 Regarding “deculturation,” Berry stated, “both common sense and pilot work indicated that such an outcome was not to be chosen by anyone.” (Berry, 1976, p. 180)
model has been applied across various fields. In subsequent studies, Berry himself often refers to this model as an explanation of “acculturation strategies” (e.g., Berry, 2001, 2005).

The Berry model composed of two simple questions seems clear and easy to use; however, the use of the model while ignoring its formation can lead to at least two definite problems. First, inconsistencies exist in the fact that the Berry model treats acculturation in the aggregate, whereas the question items are geared toward individuals. Second, there is no logical agreement in the cell labels, particularly “deculturation” (marginalization), and the meaning of the responses to the two questions (Rudmin, 2003; Schwartz, & Zamboanga, 2008).

In addition, individual tendencies may not necessarily be categorized using the 24 question items on only one of the A/I/R subscales. This is because it is possible that one individual may answer yes to questions with differing subscales. However, inconsistently, individuals and groups6 are categorized in only one of the four cells in the Berry model.

In sum, it is difficult to conclude that Berry carefully examined word meanings, principles, and consistency in the relevance between the 24 question items and the three labels; in the three labels and the two questions; and in the two questions and the 24 question items. As a result, the Berry model, which seems to be quite simple at first glance may be ambiguous and therefore has been the target of criticism, as has been previously mentioned. In other words, the Berry model was formed because of Berry’s fallacy of oversimplification.

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6 According to Berry (1984), each of the four cells is an option available to individuals as well as to groups in plural societies.
5. Conclusion

Table 1, the Berry model, and Table 2, which summarizes the 24 question items, appear to be similar, but they should be considered fundamentally different. The issue of oversimplification divides the two.

As pointedly noted by Rudmin (2003), Berry sometimes neglected to thoroughly explain things, change cell labels, or define those labels. The ambiguous posture of the model’s creator, then, can be considered as a reflection of the lack of rigorous discussion during the time of creation of the model. As seen, the Berry model is imperfect. In further studies using this model, researchers must resolve the fallacies left behind by Berry.

Acknowledgements

This study was supported in part by the Global COE Program of Japan Society for the Promotion of Science for FY 2008–2009.

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*Received March 29, 2015; accepted June 17, 2015*