

Acculturation of Nigerian Immigrants in Minnesota

by

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Abstract

This acculturation study of Nigerian adolescent (age 12–17) and youth (age 18–24) immigrants in Minnesota included 80 samples, specifically 35 male participants and 45 female participants. The categories on the scaled included: *Assimilated*, *Separated*, *Integrated*, and *Marginalized*. The result for the main research question shows that the population is likely to be integrated and less likely to be marginalized. This study also reveals that adolescents were more likely to be assimilated than youths. However, they were not likely to be different in terms of the degree to which they integrate and marginalize. In the same study, it appears that there was a difference in the acculturation of male and female participants.

Keywords: acculturation, assimilated, separated, integrated, marginalized, Nigerian, immigrants, youths, adolescents.

Introduction

This study takes a quantitative approach to investigating the acculturation of a group of West African immigrants, specifically Nigerian adolescents and youths, living in Minnesota. Similar other studies have been done with the Hispanics, Arabians, and East Africans, to name a few. The results gathered from this study will be compared to the study by Nyang (2010) on the acculturation of East-African groups (Ethiopians and Somalis) in Minnesota, in order to make an extrapolation between Nigerians and Ethiopians and Somalis. It is intended that comparing the three aforesaid groups, would support the drawing of inferences on why they were different or similar.

Acculturation has become a very important topic in cross-cultural psychology as it relates to how people who develop in a different culture come to adapt to another cultural context, psychologically and sociologically.

The term *acculturation* is used to describe the process of adaptation or even assimilation of an individual with different ethnic background, who come into prolonged and firsthand contact with another culture (Berry, 1989; Dana, 1996; Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1939). In Dana's (1996) study, she proposed that specific phases are presented in the process of acculturation. Those phases are pre-contact, contact, conflict, crisis, and adaptation. She found that stress was a presenting factor in the contact, conflict and crisis phases. These factors, although relevant, are, however, not explored in this study.

In Berry and Sam (1997), *acculturation* is the change that has resulted from migration, colonization, or other form of intercultural experience. Additionally, the term *acculturation* includes two dimensions: psychological acculturation and adaptation. That is, the psychological changes and outcome that results from experiencing acculturation. Dana (1996) suggested that acculturation yield different form of adaptation. They are *separated*, *marginalized*, *integrated*, *bicultural*, and *assimilated*. These are used to determine the extent to which one is Anglo-acculturated.

African Immigrants in America

America represents a big melting pot. Between 1980 and 1995, more than half of the foreign-born that resides in the United States came to this country (Arthur, 2000). That is, the number of immigrants coming to the United States has more than doubled. In Gordon's (1998) study, the number of Nigerians coming to the United States in the 1970s was around 670. This population increased to 6,818 in 1995. Noticeably, Africans make significant contribution to the economic enrichment in this country—specifically in engineering, medicine, and higher education, to name a few. Unknown to many in this country, Africans are becoming some of the most educated people in this continent (Arthur, 2000; Rumbaut, 1994).

The migration of Africans does not represent a monolithic entity in that the different cultures and countries in Africa represent the dynamic differences among these migrant groups. Most Africans who migrated to the United States do so voluntarily to seek better lives and to pursue economic goals (Arthur, 2000). As a result, they become more successful than they were. Hence, they share the economic benefit that results from their migratory experience with both their families and the local community that they left back in Africa. In doing so, they become the agent of change they seek through their active engagement with the social, political, and economic development of their culture of origin.

Nigerians represents 17% of African immigrant population living in the United States compared to less than 1% in the 1970s. The observed trend has shifted largely in the last 20 years (Gordon, 1998). African immigrants come to the United States pursue higher education achievement and economic viability. Then return back to Africa to become contributors of a better political and economic system, which is the goal most engendered before they moved to the United States.

Much more African immigrants than the past come to the United States to pursue higher education, focus on working and earnings or both (Alba & Farley, 2002) for the sake of returning back to Africa permanently. Recently, only a fraction return to Africa to live and become a contributing member of the society because most have established social bonding here in the United States, particularly through marriage to an American spouse (Takougang, 1995) as well as have developed a different sense of identity that may be incongruent to their culture of origin. In many ways, they have become Americanized (Stepick & Stepick, 2002). It is from this vein that a question is posed about the acculturation of the African immigrants, precisely Nigerians in the United States today. That is, could their lack of return to their country of origin be attributed to their acculturation, which is intended to be measured based on the following constructs: assimilated, integrated, separated, or marginalized (Unger et al., 2002).

Formulation of Research

This study takes a general overview of the question of the acculturation of Nigerian immigrants in Minnesota by: asking research questions, posing a hypothesis, providing a definitional context, establishing a methodology which includes, a population and sampling approach, data collection and analysis, a statement on the significance of this study, an acknowledgement of the delimitations in the study, a report of the findings, a discussion of the findings, and recommendations. Hence, this is outlined as:

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research questions asked were: (1) how do Nigerians living in Minnesota rate on the Acculturation Scale (Assimilated, Integrated, Separated, or Marginalized)? (2) is there a difference in the acculturation of male and female participants in this study?, and (3) is there a difference between adolescent (age 12–17) and youth (age 18–24) participants in this study? Hence, my two hypotheses are: (1) there is a difference in the acculturation of Nigerian males and females, and (2) there is a difference in the acculturation of Nigerian adolescent and youths age 12-17 and 18-24.

Definitional Contexts

In this study the terms assimilated, integrated, separated and marginalized are used, hence, they are defined as follows. The term *assimilated* is characterized by value for intergroup relations. Though, generally unconcerned with cultural maintenance and may experience few social difficulties (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999), meaning they abandon their culture of origin and adopt the host culture, which occurs after a prolonged contact with the other culture. Berry, Kim, Minde, and Mok (1987) linked assimilation with an intermediate stress level. Integrated via Bourhis, Barrette, El-Geledi, and Schmidt (2009) refer to immigrants who rate high on an integrated scale maintain some aspects of their culture of origin as well as adopt some parts of the host culture. The *separated* are considered those who seek to maintain their culture of origin while rejecting some components of the host culture (Bourhis et al., 2009), and the marginalized is from the work of Berry, Kim, Power, Young, and Bujaki (1989) suggesting that the marginalized are alienated from the host culture and the culture of origin; hence they may then take the individualist mentality, whereby they define themselves based on personal characteristics rather than those of the host or culture of origin (Bourhis et al., 2009). In short, they do not define themselves as being part of the culture of origin or host culture.

Methodology

A quantitative design was employed for this research. The research instrument used was adapted, with permission, from Unger et al. (2002), entitled, “The AHIMSA Acculturation Scale: A new measure of acculturation for adolescents in a multicultural society”. Its scale included four categories: 1 = *The United States*, 2 = *My country of origin*, 3 = *Both*, and 4 = *Other/neither*. The demographic questionnaire included the following identifications: gender, age, year migrated to the United States, and duration of residency in Minnesota. One category within the survey instrument (*The country my family is from*) was revised to *My country of origin* so that it would be applicable to the population being studied, especially giving that one’s generation as an immigrant was not considered in this study. After the revision, the survey was shared with its original authors and another panel of field experts, who indicated that the change was not significant to warrant retesting the instrument. Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) wrote that soliciting feedback from field experts increases validity. Thus, the instrument was considered valid.

Based on Unger et al.’s (2002) reliability testing, the Cronbach alpha for both *Assimilated* and *Integrated* was .79, *Separated* was .68, and *Marginalized* was .50. Generally, a minimum of .70 is acceptable in social science research. However, Unger et al. stated that even though the rating for separated and marginalized was low, it was still appropriate. Even having made a minor adjustment to one of the aforementioned categories, the findings from the study reflects that the instrument was still reliable.

Also, it is noteworthy to disclose that the instrument was initially intended for adolescents, meaning age 10–19. However, the term *adolescent* overlaps with the age range of youth, which was 18 to 24. In this particular study, participants ranged from age 12–24. The authors of the instrument and other field experts agreed that the instrument was still appropriate for the said population and that it has been used in other similar cases. However, that study could not be cited as it is not available in the public domain.

Population and Sampling

The research population was comprised of Nigerians between age 12 and 24 who migrated to the United States or have lived in Nigeria and resided in Minnesota. A volunteer sampling technique was employed to increase participants' freedom and reliable reporting (Bruden et al., 2005). Participants totaled 100, including male and female Nigerians. However, after going through each of the surveys, 14 were eliminated for incomplete responses, three were eliminated because the consent form was not signed, and three were not included in the study because they each ranked *Assimilated*, *Separated*, *Integrated*, and *Marginalized* at the same time, which made them invalid.

Data Collection

I visited local churches in Minnesota where Nigerians are the predominant population. I also attended two Nigerian events where participants were accessed. These events and churches were used as venues for distributing the survey. Some of the participants were encouraged to take home the study packet, which included a survey (see Appendix A), a demographic form (see Appendix B), and a consent form. They were also given written instructions on how to complete the forms, a time frame for completing the study, and an address where the completed packet was to be sent back to me. On the consent form, it was explained that participants were guaranteed anonymity; the nature of the study of the study was also explained. Also explained on the consent form was that no anticipated risk was associated with this study and that the participants would not be compensated for their participation. Rather, the benefit of their participation was that the findings would help understand the acculturation trend among Nigerians immigrants living in Minnesota. Also, the participants could elect to receive a copy of the findings once the study was completed and, in this case, their mailing address would be required.

Significance of the Research

It was intended that the findings would yield evidence relating to trends among the Nigerian adolescents and youths living in Minnesota and that they would be used to evaluate the implication of what such results would mean—that is, what that could mean for the country they left behind, particularly when only a small fraction of the large number of Nigerians who migrate to the United States and live in Minnesota return to their culture of origin or its indigenous way of life.

Delimitations

This study was limited to Minnesota. As a result, very limited generalization can be made about the Nigerian population in the United States at large. Furthermore, the data was collected from Nigerians who attended churches in Minnesota. Therefore, it excluded people who may not have participated in those events and who may not attend Nigerian churches. Lastly, a convenient sampling was used as opposed to a random sampling. Therefore, result may not be representative of the entire population.

Data Analysis

Testing and analysis of result was done using Minitab 16 software. This included descriptive statistics to determine the mean and standard deviation for each of the categories. Also, the data was analyzed using a 0.05 level of significance.

The evaluation method suggested by the authors of the instrument (Unger et al., 2002) was replicated. They suggested adding up the number of responses in each of the categories. Furthermore, the assimilation score was the number of *The United States* responses whereas the separation score was dependent on the number of *My country of origin* responses. Integration, on the other hand, was tallied from frequency of *Both* responses and marginalization was based on number of *Neither/other* responses.

Data Analysis

Descriptive Statistics: *The United States, My Country of Origin, Both, Neither/Other*

Table 1

Statistics of Participants in each Category

Variable	Total count	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i> *	Mean	St. dev.	Variance	Minimum	Median	Maximum
The United States (Assimilated)	80	80	0	2.350	1.692	2.863	0.000	2.000	6.000
My country of origin (Separated)	80	80	0	0.938	1.496	2.237	0.000	0.000	6.000
Both (Integrated)	80	80	0	4.588	1.894	3.587	0.000	5.000	8.000
Neither/other (Marginalized)	80	80	0	0.125	0.5125	0.2627	0.000	0.000	3.000

In Table 1, the “*Both*” category ranked highest in mean (4.588) whereas “*The United States*” category ranked (2.350) second highest. The “*My country*” of origin ranked third in mean (0.938) and the “*Neither/other*” category was the smallest based on the mean (0.1250).

Difference Between the Categories

Table 2

Chi-Square Test: The United States, My Country of Origin, Both, Neither/Other Response

	The United States	My country of origin	Both	Neither/other	Total
Actual data	180	75	367	10	632
	168.93	116.76	261.84	84.47	
	0.725	14.936	42.232	65.649	
Data based on equal distribution between four categories	160	160	160	160	640
	171.07	118.24	265.16	85.53	
	0.716	14.750	41.704	64.829	
Total	340	235	527	170	1272
Chi-square	245.541				
<i>Df</i>	3				
<i>P</i> -value	0.000				

Table 3

Percentage of Participants by Category

	The United States (Assimilated)	My country of origin (Separated)	Both (Integrated)	Neither/other (Marginalized)	Total
All participants	180	75	367	10	632
	28%	12%	58%	2%	100%

The total for the categories were divided equally among the categories *The United States*, *My country of origin*, *Both*, and *Neither/other*. The division between these four categories is not represented in the actual data. Therefore, the *p*-value, as illustrated in Table 2, is much smaller than 0.05. Table 3, which illustrates the percentage of participants by category, suggests the majority were represented in the “*Both*” category and least represented in the “*Neither*” category.

Difference Between Male and Female Participants

Table 4

Chi-Square Test: Male Vs Female Response

Participants	The United States	My country of origin	Both	Neither/other	Total
Male	98	25	153	4	280
	82.5	32.81	160.56	4.38	
	3.016	1.860	0.356	0.032	
Female	90	50	214	6	360
	105.75	42.19	206.44	5.63	
	2.346	1.447	0.277	0.025	
Total	188	75	367	10	640
Chi-square	359				
<i>Df</i>	3				
<i>P-value</i>	0.025				

Note. One cell with expected counts less than 5.

As illustrated in Table 4, based on the *p*-value of 0.025 being less than 0.05, it can be said that male Nigerians and female Nigerians acculturate differently. These differences are further explored in Table 5.

Table 5

Percentage of Male and Female in the Categories

Participants	The United States (Assimilated)	My country of origin (Separated)	Both (Integrated)	Neither/other (Marginalized)	Total
Male	98	25	153	4	280
	35%	9%	55%	1.40%	100.4%
Female	90	50	214	6	360
	25%	13%	59%	1.6%	98.6%

Based on Table 5, with The United States column showing male participants at 35% and females participants at 25%, it seems that male participants favored the United States more than female participants favored the United States. As compared to the My country of origin category, female participants were at 13% whereas male participants were at 9%, which suggests that female participants were more in favor of their country of origin more than male participants were in favor of their country of origin, given that female participants chose that category more often than the male participants chose that category. In other words, male participants and female participants were opposite in these categories. The female participants and male participants in this study were not significantly different in the Both and Neither/other categories. In the Both category, male participants had a ratio of 55% and female participants had a ratio of 59%, which is not significant. In the Neither category, male participants had a 1.4% ratio whereas female participants had a 1.6%. ratio. It seems that these ratios are close enough.

Difference Between Adolescent and Youth Participants

Table 6

Chi-Square Test: Adolescent Vs Youth Response

Participants	The United States	My country of origin	Both	Neither/other	Total
Adolescent	151	33	256	8	448
	131.60	52.50	256.90	7.00	
	2.860	7.24	0.003	0.143	
Youth	37	42	111	2	192
	56.40	22.50	110.10	3.00	
	6.673	16.900	0.007	0.333	
Total	188	75	367	10	640
Chi-square	34.162				
<i>Df</i>	3				
<i>P</i> -value	0.000				

Chi square is fairly robust and not particularly sensitive to the sample size difference. Based on the *p*-value (0.000) being smaller than a significant value of 0.05, it is fair to say that Nigerian adolescents acculturate differently than Nigerian youths.

Table 7

Percentage of Participants in the Categories

Participants	The United States (Assimilated)	My country of origin (Separated)	Both (Integrated)	Neither/other (Marginalized)	Total
Adolescent (age 12–17)	151	33	256	8	448
	34%	7%	57%	2%	1
Youth (age 18–24)	37	42	111	2	192
	19%	21%	58%	1%	99%

As illustrated in Tables 6 and 7, it would seem that adolescents and youths acculturate differently based on the ratio in The United States and My country of origin categories. However, the adolescents and youths in this study were not significantly different in the Both and Neither/other categories. In the Both category, adolescents had a ratio of 57% and youths had a ratio of 58%, which is not significant. In the Neither/other category, adolescents had a 2% ratio whereas youths had a 1% ratio. It seems that these ratios are close enough.

Findings

The first 100 surveys returned and completed were used. Therefore, others that came in after that were not used. The surveys not returned with its demographic questionnaire were also excluded.

Following are the findings correlated to the research questions:

How do Nigerians living in Minnesota rate on the Acculturation Scale?

- *The United States*: Assimilated are 28%
- *My country of origin*: Separated are 12%
- *Both*: Integrated are 58%
- *Neither/Other*: Marginalized are 2%

Overall, this means that the respondents were more integrated, secondly assimilated, thirdly separated, and lastly marginalized.

Is there a difference in the acculturation of male and female participants in this study?
Yes, based on the p -value of 0.025 as compared to a significant value of 0.05.

Is there a difference between adolescent (age 12–17) and youth (age 18–24) participants in this study?
Yes, based on the p -value of 0.000 as compared to a significant value of 0.05.

Table 8

Result Hypothese

Hypotheses	Results	Statistical Test
H1: There is a difference in the acculturation of Nigerian males and females	Accepted	chi-square
H2: There is a difference in the acculturation of Nigerian adolescent and youths age 12-17 and 18-24.	Accepted	chi-square

Conclusion

Based on the results from this study, it can be concluded that Nigerians in Minnesota are more likely to be integrated than assimilated and less likely to be marginalized than separated. Furthermore, female Nigerians were more likely to be separated than male Nigerians were (see Table 8). Both are more likely to integrate similarly and were less likely to be marginalized. Adolescents were more likely to be assimilated than youths. These two were not likely to be different in terms of the degree to which they integrate and marginalize. They are likely to be different on the assimilated and separated scale.

Ancillary Findings

How do the findings in the study compare to the findings of other study with different population? Because of the boundary and history that Africans share in general and with having migration in common, it would be of value to compare how immigrants from different parts of Africa in Minnesota compare on the same acculturation scale. Hence, Nyang's (2010) study of Ethiopians and Somalis is brought to bear in this section.

On the acculturation scale by Unger et al (2002), the results from Nyang (2010) pertaining to East Africans, 24 % of Ethiopians in the study were assimilated, 74% were integrated, 2% were separated and none was marginalized. The same study shows that 18.5% of Somalis were assimilated, 51% were integrated, 28.5% separated and 2% were marginalized. Nyang concluded that Ethiopians and Somalis were different significantly. Although when Nyang combined his groups (Ethiopians and Somalis), he found that males and females in his study were not likely to be different. In the same vein, when he compared ages 10-13 and 14-18, he found that there was a difference. They were both more likely to be integrated and less likely to be marginalized. However, ages 14-18 were more likely to be assimilated than ages 10-13. Compared to the results from the Nigerian study, 28% were assimilated, 58% were integrated, 12% were separated, and 2% were marginalized. The study of Nigerians included ages 12-17 and considered these participants as adolescents and ages 18-24 as youth, while the Ethiopians and Somalis study included ages 10-13 and 14-18. On this note, a fair comparison could not be made as to the similarities or difference between Nigerians, Ethiopians, and Somalis adolescents and youth. But, from the results it appears that the majority of Nigerians, Ethiopians, and Somalis were integrated. Their comparison on the marginalized section shows that the three groups were similar. All three were however different on the separated section, the disparities ranged from 2%, 28.5%, and 12%. On the assimilated section, the three groups were close, yet some differences exist based on a range of 24%, 18.5% and 28%, (Data for Ethiopians and Somalis are derived from Nyang).

Table 9

Comparison of East and West African

	Assimilated	Integrated	Separated	Marginalized
Nigerians	28%	58%	12%	2%
Ethiopians	24%	74%	2%	0%
Somalis	18.5%	51%	28.5%	2%

Discussion of Result

In Nyang's (2010) explanation of why there was a difference between Ethiopians and Somalis, he observed that Ethiopians are encouraged by parents and community elders to integrate into the culture of the host country. But for Somalis, he noted on basis of religion that Somalis being Muslims are discouraged from integrating into the host culture. Hence the significant difference in their integration and separation. For Nigerians, with majority being also integrated, Davies' (1967) study would attribute this to their English language proficiency, in that Nigerians come to the United States already speaking English fluently because of coming from a British colonized country, where the official language is English.

Based on 28% of Nigerians being assimilated and 58% being integrated (see Table 9), one could say that this may contribute to why Nigerians are choosing to stay in the United States as opposed to returning back to their culture of origin. However, further research is needed to ascertain this correlation.

With 34% of adolescents and 19% youths being assimilated and with 7% Adolescents compared to 21% youths being separated, this suggest that younger people, in this case, age 12-17 have more tendency to become more Americanized than youths, age 18-24. However, further trend analysis is needed. The males and females differences could not be explained; therefore further study is needed to determine why more males favor the United States, that is, why more males are assimilated than females.

Recommendation

Although this study adds to the body of knowledge about the Nigerian adolescents and youths who migrate to the United States, Minnesota in particular, future studies could compare how the population compares to other West Africans and East Africans. Using a qualitative approach, future studies could look at the impact of school and community programs that adolescents and youths access to determine how that impacts their acculturation. Furthermore, it would be of value to study if attending Nigerian church influences how well Nigerians remain connected with their culture of origin. That is, given that the participants in this study were accessed through the church, does maintaining relationships with the people of their Nigerian community via attending a predominantly Nigerian church and having relationships outside that community at school, work, and other venues where they mingle with people from their host culture explain why Nigerians appeared to be integrated, given the results of this study?

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Appendix A

Survey Instrument: AHIMSA Scale

	The United States	My country of origin	Both	Other/neither
I am most comfortable being with people from				
My friends are from				
The people I fit in best are from				
My favorite music is from				
My favorite TV shows are from				
The holiday I celebrate are from				
The food I eat at home are from				
The way I do things and the way I think about things are from				

Note. From “The AHIMSA Acculturation Scale: A New Measure of Acculturation for Adolescents in a Multicultural Society,” by J. B. Unger et al. (2002), *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 22(3), 225-251. Copyright year by copyright holder name. Adapted with permission.

Appendix B

Demographic Questionnaire

How old are you?

Are you a female or male?

How long have you lived in the United States?

How long have you lived in Minnesota?