

INDIVIDUALISTIC AND COLLECTIVE INTEGRATION STRATEGIES AMONG IRANIANS IN CANADA *

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Theories of intergroup relations provide a number of insights into differences between immigrants adopting heritage culture maintenance rather than assimilation integration strategies. In assessing these differences, Iranian immigrants to Canada are a suitable group to study because they seem to have a genuine choice between the two alternative integration strategies. Different patterns of responses were found for Iranians ($n = 81$) who chose an assimilationist option as opposed to a heritage culture maintenance option, with respect to commitment to Iranian cultural organizations, community contacts, social mobility strategies and perceived justice. However, differences were not found on self-perceptions of group membership or perceptions of personal ability. The implications of these results for future research are discussed.

Immigrants are faced with a range of possible strategies for integrating into a host society, and often these options are conceptualized as lying on a continuum, defined at one extreme by assimilation and at the other, by heritage culture maintenance. On the one hand, immigrants might prefer to adopt an assimilation strategy whereby they give up their heritage culture and adopt the host country culture. On the other hand, immigrants might attempt to retain as much of their heritage culture as possible. While assimilationist strategies are supported politically by a 'melting pot' policy in the U.S.A., heritage

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culture maintenance receives support from a 'multiculturalism' policy in Canada and Australia. From a social psychological perspective, the *attitudes* of immigrants toward their heritage cultures is pivotal, while in terms of *behavior* the most visible indicator of heritage cultural maintenance is membership in minority group cultural organizations.

The two contrasting integration strategies of assimilation and heritage culture maintenance have given rise to a growing debate on integration processes among immigrant groups (Abramson 1980; Glazer and Moynihan 1963, 1975; Greeley 1974; Jupp 1984; Novak 1972; Samuda et al. 1984). However, as Berry (1984) has noted, there is as yet little social psychological research on integration processes associated with assimilation and multiculturalism (for some exceptions, see Berry et al. 1977; Kim and Berry 1986; Lambert et al. 1986; Rosenthal and Hrynevich 1985; Taft 1986). The present research is based on the premise that social psychological theories of intergroup relations may offer insights into the integration process for immigrants (Taylor and Moghaddam 1987).

From an intergroup perspective, immigrants often represent a disadvantaged minority group, whose members are faced with the option of attempting either to leave their group and join the majority group (assimilation), or to remain in important ways within their own minority group (multiculturalism). Probably the most important collective strategy available to those who opt to remain within the minority group is to join ethnic organizations that seek to retain the heritage culture.

Theories of intergroup relations provide a number of important insights into the differences we might expect between those who do and those who do not join minority group organizations seeking to retain the heritage culture (Billig 1976; Tajfel 1982; Taylor and Moghaddam 1987; Worschel and Austin 1986). In particular, these insights concern the five areas of mobility strategies, perceived ability, perceived justice, community contacts, and self-perceptions.

First, a number of theories, such as social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986), the Five-Stage Model of intergroup relations (Taylor and McKirnan 1984), and elite theory (see Taylor and Moghaddam 1987), distinguish between two contrasting strategies by which members of disadvantaged groups attempt to improve their status: social mobility and collective action. Social mobility involves the individual disadvantaged group member attempting to successfully gain entrance to, and acceptance by, the advantaged group. Collective action involves

members of the disadvantaged group working together as a collectivity to improve their status. In the present context we would predict that the immigrants who join organizations designed to maintain their heritage culture would be those who favor collective action as a means of improving their status. Conversely, it is hypothesized that those who choose not to join such organizations would be more individually oriented, preferring an assimilationist strategy.

Second, the Five-Stage Model and elite theory propose that not all members of a disadvantaged group will initiate action to improve their status. Specifically, it is those who are most talented or qualified who instigate such action. Thus, we might expect non-members of heritage organizations to perceive themselves as especially qualified for success in the context of the host society. Third, most theories of intergroup relations hypothesize that collective action is associated with the perception that the existing social system is unjust. Hence, on this basis we might expect members of heritage organizations to perceive more injustice than non-members. However, the retention of heritage cultures is the cornerstone of Canada's Multicultural policy. Thus, those immigrants who join organizations designed to retain the heritage culture would in an important sense be working within the system, and they may indeed perceive the system to be relatively just. Consequently, there are reasons to expect that, in this context, collective action may be associated with perceived justice, rather than perceived injustice.

Finally, we would expect members and non-members of ethnic organizations to differ in terms of self-perceptions and community contacts. Thus, a fourth prediction is that members of heritage organizations would identify more with the heritage group than non-members, but less with majority groups. Fifth, we would expect members of heritage organizations to give more importance to developing contacts within their heritage group, rather than majority groups, as a means of trying to improve their status. These differences would reflect the differential commitment of members and non-members to their heritage culture, and their contrasting integration orientations.

Given our interest in contrasting assimilationist and heritage culture maintenance strategies we decided to focus on Iranians in Montreal. There are at least four important reasons why Iranians are an especially appropriate group to examine. First, because Iranians have arrived only recently in Canada in large numbers, they represent a group experiencing the process of making major decisions about an appropriate in-

tegration orientation to their new social surroundings. Thus, the issue of whether, and to what extent, they should invest in the retention of their Iranian culture or the adoption of the majority group culture is of practical importance in their everyday lives. Second, Iranians arriving in Canada are different from many other immigrant groups in that they tend to be relatively advantaged in resources, particularly education (Orivel 1981; Statistics Canada 1981). As a consequence, they might enjoy greater freedom in selecting an integration orientation in North America. Third, within the Canadian context, Iranians are not a 'visible minority'. This is another factor that offers them a genuine choice between alternative integration strategies. Fourth, a preliminary study of Iranian cultural groups in Montreal has identified three active organizations that are working toward the retention of the heritage culture among Iranians (Moghaddam et al. 1986). However, this same study also suggests that many Iranians are choosing not to join such organizations. Thus, despite being relatively recent arrivals, some groups of Iranians have already adopted the heritage culture maintenance integration option, while others clearly seem to prefer assimilation as an integration strategy. Consequently, there do seem to be alternative integration strategies within the Iranian population in Montreal.

The purpose of this study, then, was to examine differences between immigrants adopting 'assimilation' and 'heritage culture maintenance' integration options with respect to mobility strategies, personal ability, perceived justice, self-perception, and community contacts.

Method and Procedure

Respondents

The respondents were 81 people of Iranian origin, 43 women and 35 men (3 respondents did not specify their sex). All respondents had been raised in Iran and most (76.5%) of them had moved to Canada after 1979. The sample was in part selected by working through the cooperation of Iranian cultural organizations in the Montreal area. However, informal contacts and other routes (e.g., educational institutions) were also used and 60.5% of the eventual sample were Iranians who did not belong to an Iranian cultural organization. The age of respondents ranged from 17 to 50, the mean age being 30.5 years. The education level of respondents was high: 59.2% of them had received university training. Also high was their family status in Iran: 91.4% of respondents reported their family status in Iran to be middle, upper-middle, or upper class. Just over half (53.1%) of the respondents were married and 34.6% had children.

In terms of status in Canada, 28.4% of the respondents did not have landed immigrant status (i.e., permanent resident status), 54.3% were landed immigrants, and 14.8% were Canadian citizens (2.5% did not specify their status).

Materials

Respondents were given a five-page questionnaire and shown how to complete it, with a realization that no names were to be given and complete anonymity would be maintained. The topics in the questionnaire were as follows:

Background information: A series of demographic questions was asked, including age, sex, marital status, number of children, date of arrival in Canada, education level, status of family in Iran, occupation before leaving Iran, present status in Canada, present occupation in Canada, membership in Iranian cultural organizations, participation in activities arranged by Iranian cultural organizations, and level of fluency in English, French and Farsi.

Heritage culture maintenance: Respondents' general attitude towards heritage culture maintenance was assessed by two questions. The general debate on heritage culture maintenance in Canada was introduced by the first question in the following way: 'There is an important debate in Canada about ethnic minority groups. Some people believe that ethnic minority groups should *give up* their traditional ways of life and take on the Canadian way of life, while others believe that ethnic groups should *maintain* their traditional ways of life as much as possible when they come to Canada'. Respondents were first asked to state their personal view on this issue with respect to all groups in Canadian society, and then as regards the Iranian community in Canada specifically. Answers were given on a nine-point scale, where (1) represented total assimilation, 'Ethnic minority groups should *give up* their traditional ways of life and take on the Canadian way of life', and (9), represented the extreme of heritage culture maintenance, 'Ethnic minority groups should *maintain* their traditional ways of life as much as possible when they come to Canada'.

Mobility strategies and personal ability: Respondents' inclinations to try to get ahead as individuals or as part of a group (i.e., the Iranian community) were assessed by two questions. Both questions began with the phrase 'In order for me to get ahead in Canada it is important that...'. The first question stressed 'going it alone' and relying on individual effort, the second question stressed working with other members of the Iranian community and acting as a collectivity. Our previous research on immigrant groups and pilot work with this particular population suggested that respondents could understand and relate to questions on 'getting ahead' in this form. Next, respondents were asked, 'Given your personal capabilities, how well do you think you will do in Canada as compared to other Iranians?'. Respondents were also asked to rate the extent to which they think they might leave Canada in order to improve their chances of getting ahead.

Perceived justice: Respondents rated the extent to which they believed that Canadian society is *just and fair* in the opportunities that it provides Iranians.

Self-perceptions: Respondents' perceptions of themselves and how they believe they are perceived by Anglophones and Francophones were assessed by two sets of questions. The first set of questions required respondents to rate the extent to which they see themselves as: *an Iranian, an immigrant, a Canadian*. The second set of questions required the respondents to rate the same groups again, but now according to how they thought most Francophones and Anglophones, the two majority groups in Montreal, saw them.

Community contacts: Three questions were directed at clarifying the extent to which respondents believed it important for 'getting ahead' to develop contacts in (1) the Iranian community, (2) the Anglophone community, (3) the Francophone community.

Results and Discussion

The respondents' attitudes towards heritage culture maintenance, and the relationship between these attitudes and membership in Iranian cultural organizations are presented first. Next, differences between members and non-members of cultural organizations on mobility strategies, personal ability, perceived justice, self-perceptions, and community contacts are presented and discussed.

Heritage culture retention and membership

Responses on the issue of heritage culture maintenance in general ($M = 6.58$) and heritage culture maintenance for Iranians ($M = 6.63$) were highly similar ($r(79) = 0.91$, $p < 0.01$). In terms of the sample as a whole, this represents a moderate endorsement for heritage culture maintenance. However, the range of scores on these items were 3 to 9 and 2 to 9 respectively, suggesting that a sub-group of the sample agreed more with the assimilation alternative, endorsing the idea that ethnic minorities generally, as well as Iranians in particular, should give up their traditional ways of life and take on the Canadian way of life.

An important feature of this study was that it included a behavioral measure of heritage culture maintenance, this being actual membership in an Iranian cultural organization. The assumption that members of such organizations would be more committed to heritage culture maintenance is supported by a comparison of members ($M = 7.83$) and non-members ($M = 5.88$) on the heritage culture maintenance item, $t(76) = 4.76$, $p < 0.001$. The correlation between membership and support for heritage culture maintenance was 0.50, which is substantial, considering that the maximum value of a point-biserial correlation between a normally distributed variable and a dichotomous variable is about 0.80 (Nunnally 1978).

Consequently, the behavioral measure of heritage culture maintenance incorporated in this study differentiated between respondents who supported heritage culture

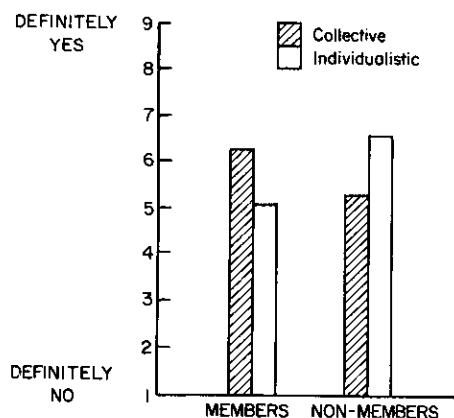


Fig. 1. Endorsement of strategies for 'getting ahead' by members and non-members.

maintenance to lesser and greater extents, and was used as a grouping variable to compare respondents on categories of responses.

Mobility strategies

The extent to which respondents endorsed mobility strategies for getting ahead in Canada was analyzed using a 2×2 ANOVA, membership (member/non-member) by mobility strategies (individual/collective). A significant effect for the membership by mobility strategies interaction emerged ($F(1, 69) = 9.72, p < 0.01$). The interaction is presented in fig. 1. A post-hoc comparison of means (Newman-Keuls) showed that members endorsed collective more than individualistic strategies ($p < 0.05$), while non-members endorsed individualistic rather than collective strategies ($p < 0.01$).

Differences between members and non-members with respect to mobility strategies were further examined by looking at their inclinations to leave Canada. Non-members ($M = 6.59$) were far more inclined than members ($M = 2.84$) to want to leave Canada in order to live in another country and to improve their chances of getting ahead, $t(78) = 8.02, p < 0.01$. Thus, members tended to believe more in working as part of the Iranian community, whereas non-members were more likely to 'go it alone' either within the Canadian context or to leave Canada for another country in order to get ahead.

Personal ability

No differences were found between members ($M = 7.13$) and non-members ($M = 7.37$) on how far they thought their personal capabilities would lead them to get ahead in Canada compared to other members of the Iranian community, $t(78) = 0.68, n.s.$ Contrary to the hypothesis then, personal ability, as defined in this context, did not

differentiate between those who choose a heritage culture maintenance as opposed to an assimilationist integration orientation. The means indicate that both members and non-members perceive themselves as highly capable. Several factors might account for the high ratings of ability found among the respondents. First, Iranians in Canada are a highly educated group; second, respondents perceived themselves as middle- or upper-class members of their own ethnic group. Third, being fairly new arrivals in Canada, those Iranians who might be unrealistically optimistic about the chances of their future success in their adopted country have perhaps not yet had enough opportunities to have their views moderated by experience. A high level of education and the perception that they belong to the higher social classes might lead Iranians to feel relatively confident about their future.

Perceived justice

There were significant differences between members and non-members with respect to how just and fair they believe Canadian society is in the opportunities that it provides Iranians. Members ($M = 5.94$) believed Canadian society to be more just and fair than did non-members ($M = 4.63$), $t(78) = 2.77$, $p < 0.01$. Bearing in mind the individualistic mobility of non-members, these results could be interpreted as suggesting that non-members are more likely to leave Canada to live in another country because they have less faith in the fairness of the Canadian system. An alternative explanation is that those having more faith in the justice of Canadian society were more willing to become 'visible' by bringing their heritage cultures out into the open, whereas those who believed Canadian society to be more unjust were more inclined to hide their culture.

Self-perceptions

Responses on the self-perception items were analyzed in a $2 \times 2 \times 3$ ANOVA, membership (member/non-member) by agent (self/majority group) by label (Iranian/immigrant/Canadian), with repeated measures on the second and third factors. The main effects for agent, $F(1, 61) = 5.69$, $p < 0.05$, and for label, $F(2, 122) = 123.87$, $p < 0.01$, were both significant, but these main effects were tempered by an agent by label interaction, $F(2, 122) = 10.68$, $p < 0.01$. The interaction is presented in fig. 2.

The pattern of responses indicates that respondents saw themselves more as Iranians and more as Canadians, but less as immigrants than they thought majority groups perceived them. A post hoc comparison of means using a Newman-Keuls procedure ($p < 0.01$) showed that these differences were all significant. Fig. 2 also indicates that respondents perceived themselves more as Iranians than immigrants, and more as immigrants than Canadians ($p < 0.01$). Finally, respondents did not differentiate between how they thought majority groups perceive them on the 'immigrant' and 'Iranian' labels, while both these labels were seen as more appropriate for majority group perceptions than was the 'Canadian' label ($p < 0.01$).

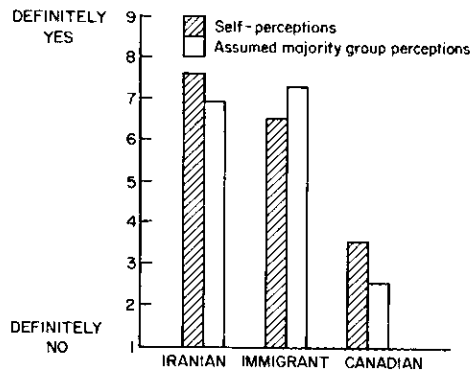


Fig. 2. Self-perceptions and assumed majority group perceptions for the labels Iranian, Immigrant, and Canadian.

The finding that Iranians believed majority group Canadians perceive them less as Canadians and more as immigrants than they perceived themselves is in agreement with previous studies focusing on the self-perceptions of minority groups in Canada (e.g., Moghaddam and Taylor 1987). However, this pattern was the same for both members and non-members and, thus, our expectation that there would be a relationship between integration orientation and self-perceptions was not confirmed. Perhaps, because Iranians are for the most part new arrivals to North America, there has been insufficient time for such differences to have developed, if they are to develop at all.

Community contacts

Responses on the extent to which respondents thought they needed to develop contacts in different communities in order to get ahead in Canada were analyzed in a 2×3 ANOVA, membership (member/non-member) by community (Iranian, Anglophone, Francophone), with repeated measures on the second factor. The main effect for membership was not significant. The main effect for community was significant, $F(2, 150) = 13.46$, $p < 0.01$, as well as the interaction effect of membership and community, $F(2, 150) = 7.48$, $p < 0.01$. A post-hoc comparison on the basis of membership, using a Newman-Keuls procedure, revealed that members gave more importance than non-members to developing contacts within the Iranian community (6.63 vs. 5.06, $p < 0.01$).

A further comparison of means across communities revealed that members did not differentiate between the importance of contacts within the three communities, but the differentiations made by non-members were significant at the $p < 0.01$ level. Thus, it was the non-members who both gave less importance to developing contacts within the Iranian community and differentiated between the importance of developing contacts within the Iranian ($M = 5.06$), Francophone ($M = 7.02$) and Anglophone ($M = 7.49$) communities.

General discussion

Two general orientations to integration emerge from these findings. The first seems to conform more with the spirit of multiculturalism and involved relatively greater endorsement of heritage culture maintenance, stronger support for Iranian cultural organizations, and a collective orientation to social mobility. This tendency to try to get ahead by relying more on the Iranian community and by being less inclined to want to leave Canada to live in another country, seemed to be coupled with greater belief in the fairness and justice of the Canadian system.

A second integration orientation seems in some ways to be more in harmony with assimilation and involved relatively less endorsement of heritage culture maintenance, less support for Iranian cultural organizations, and an individualistic orientation to social mobility. This tendency to try to get ahead by 'going it alone', rather than as part of the Iranian community, seemed to be coupled with less faith in the fairness and justice of the Canadian system.

Respondents who adopted a collective orientation and desired to retain the heritage culture in Canada had the same high level of confidence about doing well, as did respondents who adopted an individualistic orientation and desired to adopt the Canadian way of life. This generally high level of confidence might be due to the fact that Iranians in Canada generally have a high level of education and also perceive themselves as belonging to the middle- or upper-classes of their own ethnic group. Also, perhaps part of the reason for the two very different but equally optimistic integration strategies within the Iranian community is that Iranians may not perceive themselves to be a 'visible' minority. Thus, unlike members of visible minorities (Moghaddam and Taylor 1987) they may perceive that they have a genuine choice in terms of strategy for integration. On the one hand, they can maintain their heritage culture in the context of a just Canadian society while, on the other hand, as individuals they can successfully pass into the mainstream of Canadian society.

The case of Iranians in Canada is particularly instructive in that it represents an example of a culture in which both individualistic and collective integration orientations seem to have evolved. This example suggests that it might be useful to reconceptualize the differentiation of cultures on a dimension of 'individualism' versus 'collectivism' (Hofstede 1980, 1983; Hui and Triandis 1986; Triandis 1987) since

both individualistic and collective orientations seem to be influential in fundamental ways within some cultures. Also important is the possibility that both individualistic and collective orientations be present within the same individuals, with greater emphasis being placed on one or the other orientation depending upon the demands of the social situation. This possibility was not examined in the present study, but deserves serious attention in future research.

The results of this study point to several topics that could usefully become a focus for future research, among them being the relationship between perceived justice and mobility orientations. Perceived injustice is generally regarded as a prerequisite for collective action (Tajfel and Turner 1986; Taylor and McKirnan 1984; Taylor and Moghaddam 1987). However, in this case those respondents who believed more in the justice and fairness of the system were more likely to endorse heritage culture maintenance and a collective strategy for 'getting ahead'. This is probably because those who perceived Canadian society to be more just were also more likely to be motivated to work according to the rules of the system, such as the official multiculturalism policy. However, it is doubtful if the politicians who formulated the policy of multiculturalism were fully aware of the implications this policy could have for individualistic and collectivistic mobility orientations. The possibility that cultural retention and pride in the heritage culture will be associated with stronger support for collective mobility strategies is both conceptually exciting and of fundamental practical importance.

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Les théories des relations intergroupes offrent un schème pour comprendre les différences qui existent dans les stratégies d'intégration d'immigrants, soit l'assimilation ou le maintien de la culture d'origine. Des Iraniens ($n = 81$) au Canada ont été choisis comme groupe d'étude puisqu'ils semblaient représenter un groupe ayant un choix véritable entre ces deux stratégies. Les résultats indiquent que les Iraniens qui choisissent une stratégie d'assimilation diffèrent des Iraniens qui choisissent de maintenir leur culture d'origine, dans leur engagement aux organisations culturelles, leurs choix de contacts, leurs stratégies d'avancement social et leurs perceptions de justice. Aucune différence existe, cependant, dans les perceptions d'identité ou d'habileté personnelle. Les résultats sont discutés en fonction de l'élaboration d'un cadre de recherche.