

ACCULTURATION JOURNEYS  
OF INTERNATIONAL FACULTY:  
RESULTS FROM A NARRATIVE  
QUALITATIVE STUDY  
AT TWO MIDWEST RESEARCH  
UNIVERSITIES

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# Purpose of the study:

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- The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of international faculty with H-1B visa statuses in tenure track positions at two Midwest research institutions in order to determine how they make meaning of their new scholarly roles within American tertiary institutions of education.
- All faculty participants had been in their faculty position for one year or less.

# Participants of the study

Population (N = 44)	Sample (n = 11)
<b>Gender</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Male = 31 (70.5%)</li><li>•Female = 13 (29.5%)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Male = 6 (54.5%)</li><li>•Female = 5 (45.5%)</li></ul>
<b>Global Region of Origin</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Asia = 30 (68.2%)</li><li>•Europe = 8 (18.2%)</li><li>•South America = 4 (9.1%)</li><li>•Africa = 2 (4.5%)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Asia = 6 (54.5%)</li><li>•Europe = 2 (18.2%)</li><li>•South America = 1 (9.1%)</li><li>•Africa = 2 (18.2%)</li></ul>
<b>Participants' Institution</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Midwest Research Urban = 22 (50%)</li><li>•Midwest Research Flagship = 22 (50%)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Midwest Research Urban = 7 (63.4%)</li><li>•Midwest Research Flagship = 4 (36.4%)</li></ul>
<b>Participants' Field of Study</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•STEM Fields = 24 (54.5%)</li><li>•non-STEM Fields = 20 (45.5%)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•STEM Fields = 6 (54.5%)</li><li>•non-STEM Fields = 5 (45.5%)</li></ul>
<b>Terminal Degrees from U.S. Institutions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•U.S. Terminal Degrees = 33 (75%)</li><li>•non-U.S. Terminal Degrees = 11 (25%)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•U.S. Terminal Degrees = 9 (81.8%)</li><li>•non-U.S. Terminal Degrees = 2 (18.2%)</li></ul>

# Data collection:

- Participants were interviewed twice during the 2009-2010 academic year;
- Interviews were transcribed & member checked by faculty participants;
- Transcripts were coded and analyzed employing narrative theory in *MAX-QDA*, a qualitative software program;
- A master narrative of international faculty members' acculturation journeys was presented.

# Acculturation:

- **Acculturation** “refers to the form of transmission experienced by individuals that results from contact with, and influence from, persons and institutions belonging to cultures other than their own” (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 2002, p. 21).
- Berry’s (1980) acculturative model assumes that it is possible to identify with a new culture without losing one’s heritage culture.

# Berry's model of acculturation\*\*

## ISSUE 1:

MAINTENANCE OF HERITAGE CULTURE AND IDENTITY

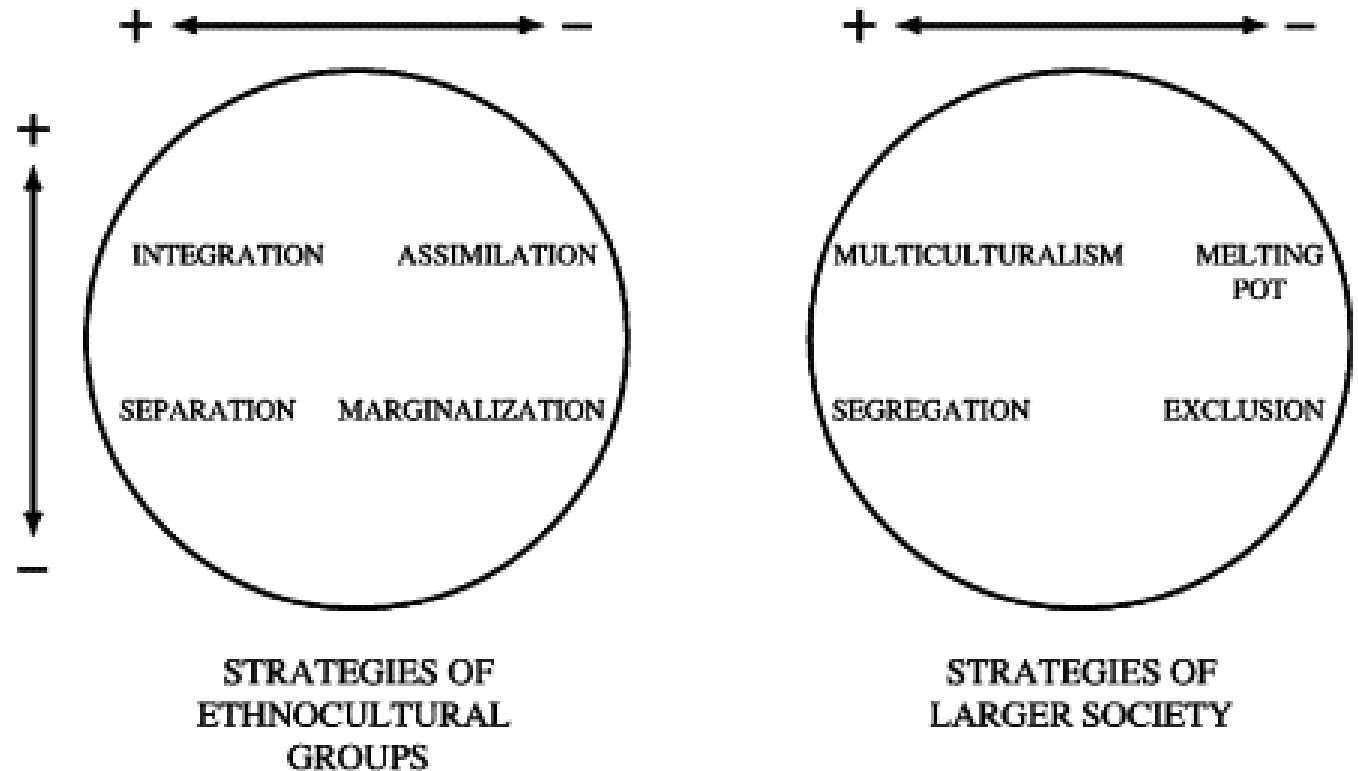
## ISSUE 2:

RELATIONSHIPS

SOUGHT

AMONG

GROUPS



\*\*From "Acculturation: Living Successfully in Two Cultures," by J. W. Berry, 2005, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 32, p. 205.

# Acculturation strategies:

- Berry, Phinney, Sam, and Vedder's (2006) study found immigrant adolescents employing the integration strategy of acculturation were more satisfied and successful in their transition to adulthood in their new homeland.
- Similar notions were also held by participants of this study;
  - The majority employed the strategy integration;
  - Others indicated strategies of separation were employed.

# Acculturative frames employed:

Relations sought among groups

## Maintenance of heritage culture and identity

### Integration

So instead of thinking of it as 'oh I am not at home,' or 'home is over there,' now I think of myself as having multiple homes. If I am here, I am at home in some ways. And when I am there, I am at home there.

### Assimilation

... I learned the skills of how to entertain the audience by watching the priest. ...Joel Osteen...the well I don't watch that kind of show that much, but it is just amazing the religious channel, that when I flip through they have got tons, tons of audience. And I just wonder how they make the content interesting. And I know that the American culture is based on Christian, so I want to know how the priest they talk about this Bible content, how they use this example something to... I mean attractive to the audience. So that is a strategy I try to learn from the speakers—the good speakers of priests.

### Separation

When you work in a country that you are not sure if you are going to stay there or not, you don't invest in anything. You just live like you are going to leave tomorrow. You don't buy anything. You don't buy a house, you don't invest in anything. You don't start a big family. You just live a basic life. You don't buy any expensive car or anything until you get something that certifies—ok—I am going to stay here and this is my permit. But you know, visa—visa is the problem everywhere. So if you are on visa, you are the most uncertain people.

### Marginalization



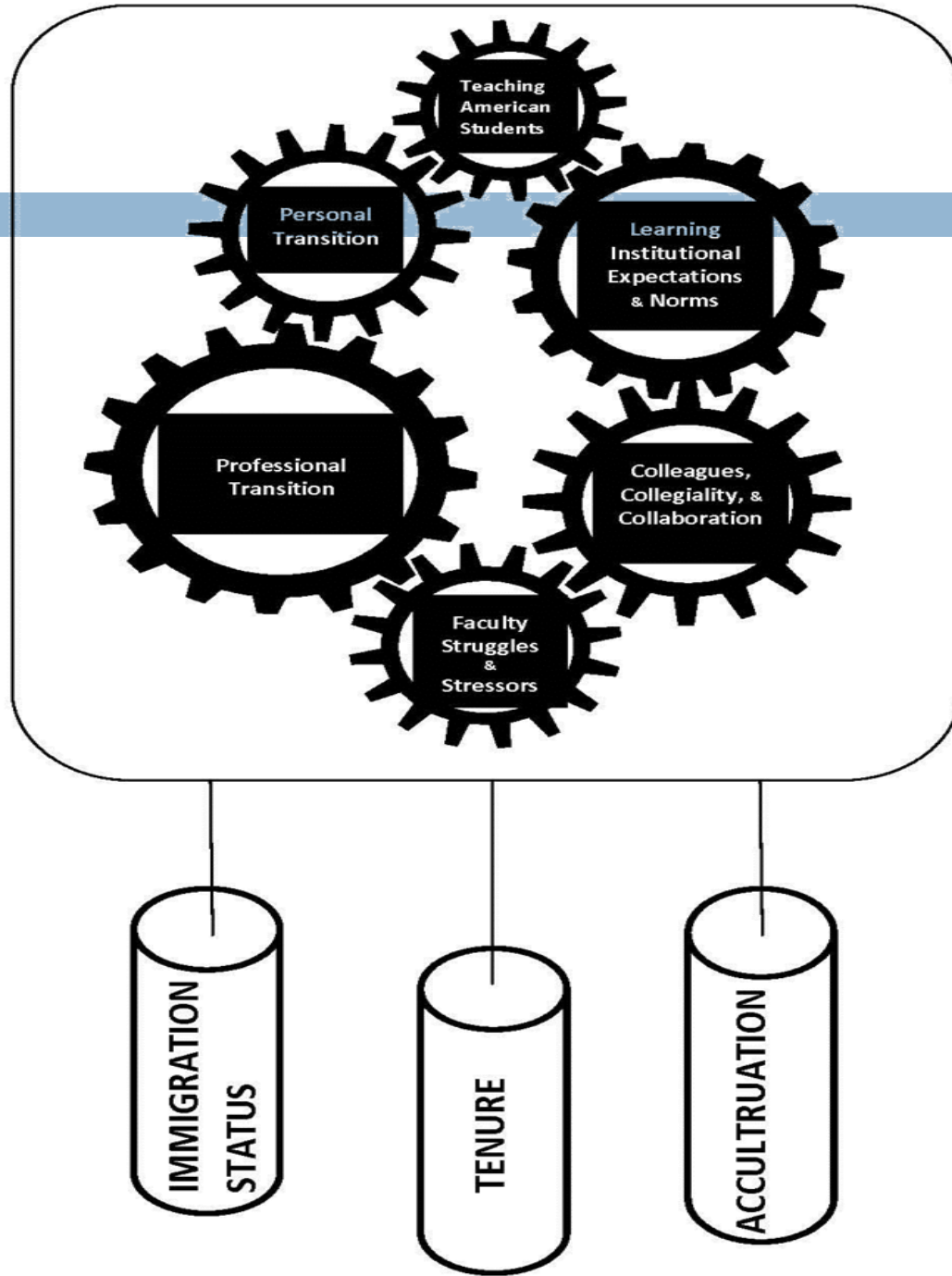
# Features of faculty employing strategies of integration:

- Administrative support (Deans, Department Chairs)
- Faculty peers
  - ▣ Senior/tenured faculty mentors
  - ▣ Teaching mentors
  - ▣ Fellow junior faculty in their department & beyond
- Collegial & supportive atmospheres
- Orientation programs
- Social & community support systems
  - ▣ Sense of “home”

# Features of faculty employing strategies of separation:

- Immigration status
  - ▣ Lack of understanding of the processes & procedures
  - ▣ Low tolerance for uncertainty
- Lack of sustained orientation programs
- Absence of administrative support
- Lack of mentorship
- Deficient notions of collegiality
- Language and cultural barriers

# Findings:



# Seminal findings:

- Faculty approach to immigration status greatly impacts their acculturative approaches;
- Critical role of collegial support & social supports in the acculturative process;
- Physical & departmental barriers greatly impact notions of collegiality;
- Time in U.S. was not a critical factor in determining acculturative strategies;

# Seminal findings (continued):

- Socialization in graduate school assists, but does not fully prepare scholars for their faculty roles;
  - ▣ Expectations for tenure;
  - ▣ Teaching American students;
- Sustained orientation programs are necessary to facilitate acculturation;
  - ▣ International faculty support groups
  - ▣ International faculty mentors
- Greater, consistent support is necessary to aid in the social transition;

# References:

- Berry, J. W. (1980). Acculturation as varieties of adaption. In A. M. Padilla (Ed.), *Acculturation: Theory, models and some new findings* (pp. 9-25). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Berry, J. W. (2005). Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, (29)6, 697-712.
- Berry, J. W., Phinney, J. S., Sam, D. L., & Vedder, P. (2006). Immigrant youth: Acculturation, identity, and adaption, *Applied Psychology*, (55)3, 303-332.
- Berry, J. W., Poortinga, Y. H., Segall, M. H., & Dasen, P. R. (2002). *Cross-cultural psychology: Research and applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.